UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 00300253 2

82

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026 with funding from
University of Toronto

https://archive.org/details/twelvemenofbenga0000brad

TWELVE MEN OF BENGAL
IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

F. B. BRADLEY-BIRT

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE (I.C.S)

Present-Magistrate of Khulna

With Twelve Illustrations

SECOND EDITION

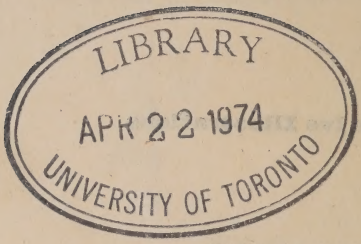
CALCUTTA:

S. K. LAHIRI AND CO., COLLEGE STREET

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED]

Price Rs. 2.

DS
485
B49B7
1923



Printed and Published by J. C. Ghosh at the Cotton Press, 57, Harrison Road, Calcutta, for Messrs. S. K. Lahiri & Co.—25-12-23—XX

PREFACE.

THE following pages attempt to give a necessarily short but, it is hoped, complete sketch of the lives of twelve among the most prominent men of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century. The difficulty of selection where so many names occur will be obvious. I have, however, by no means attempted to select the twelve most distinguished names of the century, but rather those whose lives may be regarded as typical of the varied conditions of Bengal during that momentous period in its history. The selection has been further guided by a desire to cover the whole of the century so that the book may be not only a record of the lives of Twelve Men of Bengal but a comprehensive though brief sketch of the wonderful revival, social, moral and intellectual, which came to the Province during the period. Among the six Hindus and the six Muhammadans, to whom the present volume has been limited, will be found the social reformer and the merchant prince, the religious revivalist and the philanthropist, the Government official and the educationalist, the descendant of a long line of ruling chiefs and the self-made man who won his own way to wealth and influence. If by serving to remind the people of Bengal of the splendid examples that the great men of their own race have set before them,

and by bringing home to Englishmen a greater knowledge of a few of the noble and devoted lives lived by men of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century, this little book may in its own small way increase the respect and sympathy between men of different creeds and races, it will amply fulfil its purpose.

Save in the case of Haji Mahomed Mohsin, of whose family I know of no representative surviving and in writing of whom I have had the kind assistance of the Mutwali of the Hooghly Imambara, I have to thank very cordially the representatives of the subjects of these sketches for the material assistance they have given me and for the interest they have taken in the book.

F. B. B-B.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE.
1.	RAM MOHAN ROY	1
2.	HAZI MOHOMED MOHSIN	35
3.	RAMTANU LAHIRI....	61
4.	NAWAB AMIR ALI KHAN BAHADUR	89
5.	MAHARAJADHIRAJ MAHTAB CHAND RAI BAHADUR OF BURDWAN	101
6.	NAWAB ABDUL LATIF KHAN BAHADUR	111
7.	KESHUB CHANDRA SEN	141
8.	NAWAB SIR KHAWJA ABDUL GHANI MIA	173
9.	MAHARAJA DURGA CHARAN LAW	185
10.	NAWAB BAHADUR SYED WALAYET ALI KHAN	199
11.	MAHARAJA SIR JOTINDRA MOHAN TAGORE	219
12.	NAWAB SIR SYED HASSAN ALI MIRZA KHAN BAHADUR AMIR-UL-OMRAH	241

Ram Mohan Roy

RAM MOHAN ROY.

1772—1833.

AMONG the famous men of Bengal in the nineteenth century no name deserves a more honoured place than that of Ram Mohan Roy. At once the pioneer of the great Renaissance that was slowly dawning in Bengal and the first representative of India to the British people, he opened up to his fellow countrymen new paths of progress and reform. When as yet the old traditions and the old beliefs, clothed in the gathering ignorance of centuries, still held their ground, unchallenged, he zealously sought fresh knowledge and, when found, proclaimed it unafraid. Against ignorance and superstition he waged constant warfare, striving always to find the truth in all things. Hinduism both in its social and religious aspects had fallen on evil days. Sunk in apathy and fast bound by tradition, it was left to Ram Mohan Roy and his little band of followers to prepare the way for its Renaissance. By his ceaseless labours in the cause of education, his successful advocacy of the abolition of *Sati*, his endeavours to purify the Hindu faith, and by his wonderful bringing together of East and West in the last three years of his life, he has left an undying claim upon the gratitude of his fellow-countrymen.

Ram Mohan Roy was born on May the 22nd, 1772 at Radhanagar near Krishnagar. He came of a Brahman family, Kulins of the highest caste, which had won rank and wealth in the service of the Nawabs of Bengal. His grandfather Brajabinode Roy, was like all his family a zealous follower of the Vaishnava sect. Nothing but the most unusual circumstances, therefore, accounted for the fact that his fifth son Ram Kanto Roy, the father of Ram Mohan Roy, was married to a girl whose father not only was a Bhanga Kulin, one who had broken his Kulin caste, but was also a priest of the rival sect of the Saktas. Brajabinode Roy, it is said, lay dying on the banks of the Ganges when a priest suddenly appeared before him and craved of him a boon. The dying man, anxious to comply with a priest's request, gave the required promise and further at the priest's request swore by the holy Ganges to fulfil it. The priest thereupon asked to be allowed to bestow his daughter in marriage upon one of Brajabinode's sons. This was a request that Brajabinode, as an orthodox Kulin, would have scouted had he not sworn by the sacred river, but, having done so, he had no alternative save to fulfil his promise. So, calling his sons, he turned to the eldest and bade him espouse the girl, only to meet with a determined refusal. His next three sons also declined in their turn. Ram Kanto Roy, the fifth son, however, unwilling to refuse his father's last request reluctantly consented to take the unwel-

come bride and in due course married her. It was a strange union from which to spring so ardent a reformer as Ram Mohan Roy.

Brought up in the midst of such orthodox surroundings Ram Mohan early showed signs of a religious bent of mind. His father, having retired from the service of the Nawab, was spending his days in pious meditations and religious exercises at Radhanagar and he early took steps to secure for his son a sound classical education. When the latter had finished his first course of study at the local *patshala* where he had already acquired considerable proficiency in Persian, he was sent to Patna and Benares to acquire Arabic and Sanskrit. Here his studies appear to have been somewhat more liberal than those usually indulged in at the time and he is said to have become acquainted with Arabic translations of Euclid and Aristotle as well as with the Koran. The latter made a deep impression on his mind and it is probable that it was this early study of it that later led him to question the orthodox beliefs in which he had been brought up. His first religious enthusiasms, however, were naturally for the old faith. It is said that at the age of fourteen nothing but his mother's earnest entreaties withheld him from leaving home as a sannyasi. Every home influence ran on orthodox lines. Already long before he had reached an age of discretion he had been married three times according to Kulin Brahman

usages. There is no record of the first marriage but he was married for the second and third time when he was only nine years old. His father, zealous and devoted, from the first continually instructed him in the religious observances of his faith, while his mother having accepted her husband's beliefs showed all the enthusiasm of a convert. It is thus evident that from his earliest years nothing but the most orthodox influences surrounded the future reformer. How great a hold they retained over him through all his schemes for advancement and reform his future actions show. The sacred Brahmanical thread was worn by him till the end, being found upon him after his death in England fifty years later.

Yet so eager had been his thirst for knowledge that before he had reached his sixteenth year he was able to discuss religious matters on an equality with his father. Gradually the discussions grew into arguments, respectful always on Ram Mohan's side yet none the less determined and sincere, until at last father and son realised that they differed fundamentally and hopelessly on matters of belief. It was a terrible blow to Ram Mohan's orthodox parents and relations. Hinduism, as they practised it, he regarded as overlaid with superstition and idolatry. Already his studies in the sacred books of his faith had led him to regard the modern practice of it as a false and degenerate

exposition of the pure original belief. With Hinduism as yet he had no quarrel, but with the abuses that had crept into it he thus early began his long and gallant struggle. So incompatible had his views become with the orthodox home life of his family and so great was his desire for more knowledge that he decided to leave home at least for a time. Eager to study other religions, to see if they had preserved the truth he so much desired to find, his thoughts turned towards Buddhism and Tibet. Though not yet seventeen he made light of difficulties and dangers and setting out on an adventurous journey spent three years in travelling through Tibet, studying Buddhism and holding long discussions with the most learned Lamas of the day. Their religion, however, pure as it had been in its origin, he regarded as having become as corrupt as his own and he returned home disheartened and disappointed. Life in the old home, surrounded by all the old observances in which he had lost faith, he soon again found to be impossible. Deeply as he regretted the breach with his father to whom he was deeply attached, he nevertheless recognised the inevitable, and went to reside at Benares, which attracted him as the centre of Hinduism where he might hope to find its best exposition and where he might continue his studies in Sanskrit and Persian. Here he remained for several years, deep-

ly immersed in the study of the Hindu Shastras, and striving always to gain from them a firm foundation of belief.

It was not until 1806 that Ram Mohan first began the study of English and seven years later that he entered the service of the East India Company. He appears to have spent the greater part of his ten years service under Mr. John Digby, of the Civil Service, whom he served as Dewan or Sheristadar in Bhagalpur and Rungpur. Mr. Digby, who later edited Ram Mohan's translations of the Kena Upanishad and his abridgment of the Vedanta, had a high opinion of his abilities and wrote in high praise of the work he did in connection with the survey and settlement operations in which he was chiefly concerned. For five years he was stationed at Rungpur and it was here that he first began those small gatherings of his friends for reading and discussions in his own house which were afterwards to become such a famous centre of thought and interest. Already he had begun to publish his writings. The first of an immense number of publications on an infinite variety of subjects was a treatise in Persian with an Arabic preface entitled *Tahfut-ul-muahhidin*, being a protest against the idolatry which had crept into so many established religions. For long he had refrained from any public exposition of his opinions, from the filial desire not to do violence to his father's feelings. The breach with

his father had been a constant grief to him and though he stood by the old man's bed-side when he lay dying in 1803, they were far apart in spirit. After his father's death Ram Mohan inherited none of the family property and his relations with his mother and other relatives became unfortunately still more strained. From all of them he suffered the most bitter persecution, his mother being particularly incensed against him and making life impossible for him anywhere in the neighbourhood of his old home. He protested vehemently against the charges of heresy and godlessness that were brought against him, but they would have none of him. In after days when he had come into possession of the family property, he showed his liberality and forbearance by allowing his mother to continue the management of it, and to retain the position she had always held.

Practically disowned by his family there was thus nothing to prevent Ram Mohan from pursuing the course which he considered right. Coming to reside in Calcutta, he quickly formed a circle of his own. His striking personality and force of character from the first exercised an extraordinary influence over all those with whom he was brought in contact. He had all the advantages of distinction of manner and appearance as well as brilliant conversational powers. "Ram Mohan Roy" wrote an Englishman who knew him well "surpassed the generality of his countrymen in his personal appearance almost as much as in his

mental powers. His figure was beyond the common height and muscular in proportion. His countenance wore an expression of blended dignity and benevolence that charmed at first sight and put his visitors at their ease while it checked an irreverent familiarity." "It was in argument, however," notes another English friend in the English Court Journal, "that this exalted Brahmin was most conspicuous: he seemed to grapple with truth intuitively and called in invective, raillery, sarcasm and sometimes a most brilliant wit, to aid him in confuting his opponents: if precedent were necessary, a remarkably retentive memory and extensive reading in many languages supplied him with a copious fund; and at times with a rough unsparing, ruthless hand he burst asunder the meshes of sophistry, error and bigotry in which it might be attempted to entangle him. In conversation with individuals of every rank and of various nations and professions, he passed with the utmost ease from one language to another, suiting his remarks to each and all in excellent taste and commanding the astonishment and respect of his hearers."

When this brilliant personality first made itself felt in Calcutta in the early years of the nineteenth century Hinduism had reached well nigh its lowest ebb. Not yet wholly emerged from the troublous times of the eighteenth century, it was not in a position to reap the full advantages of the

rule of law and order which under British supremacy was gradually settling down upon the distracted land. Hindu Society, in the usual acceptation of the term, there was none. Nothing that could be called public opinion existed. Bengal had no literature, scarcely even a language of its own. Such education as existed was confined to Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, and even the study of these languages had fallen into decay. Hinduism and all that it represented had fallen on evil times. To the task of restoring and reforming it and of constructing the fabric of Society anew, of bringing together all that was best and noblest, and of making for the first time in their history the Bengali race into a people with great thoughts, high hopes and aspirations, Ram Mohan Roy set the whole force of his brilliant intellect and personality. It was but a reformer's accepted fate that he should meet with opposition and distrust from those whom he most strenuously strove to serve. Far in advance of his time he encountered constant abuse and bitter persecution, yet even by exciting opposition he did his country service. In so doing he aroused public interest where there had been none before : he made men think for themselves and realise their great responsibilities : and above all he created that potent force, public opinion, to lead the nation along straight and honest paths. A keen patriot he gratefully recognised how much the British Government had done for his

long distracted country and it was his keen endeavour to awaken his fellow-countrymen to the advantages that it offered them, and to raise them, morally and mentally, from the slough of despond into which they had fallen.

It was in 1815 that Ram Mohan founded the Atmiya Sabha, the Friendly Association, the first Society of its kind in Bengal. It was a development of the informal gatherings for reading and discussion which he had long held privately in his own house, and its object was mental, moral and spiritual improvement. It met once a week for recitation and reading of the Hindu sacred books and at its gatherings were to be found most of the more ardent younger spirits of the day in Calcutta. From this small beginning came great events. Gradually it was borne in upon Ram Mohan Roy and his little circle of followers that the first and most urgent need of their fellow countrymen was a more modern system of education, adapted to the needs of modern conditions, which in the last half century had so completely changed the face of Bengal. After many discussions a practical scheme was determined upon. An English College for the education of Hindus in English and western Science should be forthwith started in Calcutta. Gaining the sympathy of such man as David Hare, the one-time watchmaker who had so zealously espoused the cause of education in Bengal, Sir Hyde East, the Chief Justice, Baidyanath

Mukherjee and Dwarkanath Tagore, a meeting was convened on the 14th of May 1816 to carry out the scheme. It was held in Sir Hyde East's house, and Ram Mohan, probably divining that the animosity he had aroused in certain quarters might endanger the scheme if too prominently associated with his name, was not present and when it was proposed at the meeting to place his name on the Committee several members threatened at once to withdraw if he was to be in any way connected with it. When this was communicated to him by his friend David Hare, Ram Mohan immediately insisted on the withdrawal of his name, anxious only that the scheme on which he had set his heart should not be endangered. If he could carry that through to a successful issue it mattered little that his name was not to be publicly associated with it. Yet that he was the moving spirit throughout, few were in doubt, and so energetic was the enthusiastic little band of reformers that the Hindu College was able to begin its work on January the 20th 1817. Other schools were founded about this time by the London Missionary Society at Chinsura and the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore and with all these efforts to provide modern education on modern lines Ram Mohan heartily sympathised.

Meanwhile Government had still to be convinced of the advisability of departing from the old system of education on strictly classical lines. From the

outset the East India Company had been guided by a sincere desire to avoid all appearance of endeavouring to force western ideas upon the eastern mind. Not only in the matter of religious beliefs but on all things social and educational it strove to avoid even the suspicion of interference. The pioneers of the English in India showed themselves far more ready to adapt themselves to the East than to force the east to imitate or adapt itself to them. The Company had hitherto directed all its efforts to improving on its own lines what it already found in existence. An extraordinarily large proportion of Englishmen in the earliest days threw themselves eagerly into the study of Sanskrit and they were quick to discern how lamentably it had fallen into decay among the Bengal pundits and how shallow was their knowledge of the Vedas and Vedantas, the Gita and the Puranas, which had wellnigh ceased to be read. As for Bengali it had scarcely yet attained the dignity of a language. When the Fort William College was started in order to give young Civilians a knowledge of the vernacular, there were no text books in Bengali, no Bengali grammar and few books of any kind in Bengali prose. Even in such Bengali books as there were, Persian words very largely predominated. It is astonishing to find in what little respect the vernacular was held. When Mr. Adam, a friend of Ram Mohan, suggested that certain lectures should be given in Bengali, the

Indian members of his committee strongly opposed the suggestion, saying, that 'anything said or written in the vernacular tongue would be degraded and despised in consequence of the medium through which it was conveyed.' It was not till 1847 that the *Vetala Panchabinsati* the first book in pure Bengali was published.

The establishment of the Fort William College, of the Hindu College and of the various missionary Schools gave a considerable impetus to the cause of education. Government, anxious to fulfil its part, inaugurated a scheme for a Sanskrit College in Calcutta, an annual grant of a lac of rupees being set aside for the revival of classical learning. Ram Mohan, convinced that it was along modern lines that the education of his countrymen must proceed if they were to grapple adequately with modern conditions, wrote to Lord Amherst, the Governor General, urging the necessity of adopting the study of western sciences through the medium of English. "If it had been intended to keep the British nation from real knowledge" he wrote, "the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population

is the object of the Government it will subsequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed, by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning, educated in Europe, and providing a College furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus." The letter was forwarded to the Governor General by Bishop Heber, who admired its 'good English, good sense and forcible arguments' and it was largely owing to Ram Mohan's exertions that, although the Sanskrit College was founded in 1824, a building was founded for the Hindu College adjoining it, the foundation stones of both being laid on the same day. Misfortune however befell the Hindu College almost at the outset. The merchant who had been entrusted with its funds, amounting to Rs. 1,13,179, suddenly failed, only Rs. 23,000 being recovered. The loss of this sum would have been the ruin of the College had not government at once come forward to its assistance, which was the means eventually of bringing it into closer touch with the authorities and placing it financially on a firmer footing. The formation of the Committee of Public Instruction in 1823 by order of the Company showed the interest that Government was taking in the matter and assured a brighter outlook for education in time to come.

Ram Mohan had meanwhile been waging incessant war against what he rightly considered one of the most depraved customs that was forming a dark blot upon the Hindu faith. Of the evils of *Sati* he had had bitter experience in his own family. On the death of his elder brother he had hastened home to be present at the funeral ceremony, only to be horrified by a scene that remained burned for ever in his memory. Before his arrival his brother's widow had announced her intention of immolating herself on her dead husband's funeral pyre and in spite of all his protestations she remained firm in her resolve. Ram Mohan, helpless in the face of her determination and the approval of all her relatives, could do nothing. But when the torch had been applied and the flames leapt up, her courage forsook her and she tried to escape from the burning logs. Thereupon the priests, helped by her relatives and friends, thrust her back with long bamboo poles and forced her down among the flames, until she lost consciousness, the drums and musical instruments sounding loudly meanwhile to drown her shrieks. Ram Mohan, one against many, was forced to stand by, a reluctant spectator of this heart-rending scene. Then and there he vowed that he would devote himself heart and soul to the abolition of this revolting practice, and from that time onward he became the leader of the gallant little band of men to whose exertions it was largely due that *Sati* was finally prohibited.

Ram Mohan carried out his campaign with characteristic thoroughness. Having suffered so severely from persecution himself, he was utterly opposed to coercion in any form. He would avoid, if possible, even compelling people to do what was right, if by any means they could be brought to do what was right by persuasion and a greater diffusion of knowledge. He therefore first endeavoured by every means in his power to bring home to this fellow-countrymen the real hideousness of the practice. His pen seemed never to flag and treatises, letters and articles, written many of them in the vernacular and in the simplest possible language so that they might reach the humblest, were disseminated far and wide. In them he was careful to maintain an attitude of orthodox Hinduism. He insisted on the fact that *Sati*, though sanctioned by the *shastras*, was not enjoined by them as a compulsory religious duty. He pointed out how the practice had largely grown up owing to the avaricious desire of the relatives to avoid the cost of supporting the widow and how it was too often regarded not as a religious act but as a choice entertainment that appealed to the lowest human instincts. One of his treatises was in the form of a dialogue between an advocate and an opponent of *Sati*. The opponent maintains that though there may be some sanction in the sacred writings for the practice, yet that Manu, the greatest of all law

givers expressly enjoined that a widow should live as an ascetic and should 'continue till death forgiving all injuries, performing honest duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue.'

Not content with combating the evil from the comfortable vantage of his desk, he was wont constantly to go to the Calcutta burning ground and attempt by personal persuasion upon both the victim and her friends to prevent the *Sati*. It has often been the practice to tie the victim down upon the funeral pyre so that escape was impossible, but Ram Mohan insisted that the pyre should first be lighted so that the widow might voluntarily enter the flames if she so desired, quoting certain passages in the *shastras* that required this to be done. His hope that the sight of the flames might turn the widow from her intentions was often fulfilled though in other cases, the fear of the priests and the exhortations of her own relatives or promises of reward in the life to come, drove her to self immolation. Finally, disheartened at the slow progress of his campaign, Ram Mohan organised a petition to the Governor General which was signed by a great number of the most respectable inhabitants of Calcutta. 'Your petitioners are fully aware from their own knowledge,' it ran, 'or from the authority of credible eye-witnesses that cases have frequently occurred where women have been induced by the

persuasions of their next heirs, interested in their destruction, to burn themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands; that others who have been induced by fear to retract a resolution rashly expressed in their first moments of grief, of burning with their deceased husbands, have been forced upon the pile and there bound down with ropes, and pressed with green bamboos until consumed with the flames; that some, after flying from the flame have been carried back by their relations and burnt to death. All these instances, your petitioners humbly submit, are murders according to every *Shastra*, as well as to the common sense of all nations."

The question of *Sati* had for years been engaging the anxious attention of Government. Here again its sincere desire not to interfere with native customs and observances, more especially in the case of a religious rite, had prevented the Company from taking active steps. From the outset the Company had scrupulously maintained the principle it had adopted of full and complete religious toleration. Yet here was a religious observance which to them was opposed to every sentiment of humanity. It was a difficult position. *Sati* was undoubtedly a rite sanctioned by the Hinduism of the day, with which according to the principle they had adopted they should not interfere, yet it was impossible for them to stand by and see human life, as they considered it, wantonly sacrificed. It was

sufficiently repugnant to them when the victim willingly immolated herself. When however as happened in so many cases, she was actually forced on to the funeral pyre against her will, it was impossible to stand by and permit it. Several instances had occurred in which the local officers had humanely prevented widows from being forced against their will to commit *Sati*, and cases brought by the aggrieved relatives had come before the courts. The practice of *Sati* not being illegal, the courts could only declare illegal any interference with it. The Judges were thus put, as they hastened to protest, in a most embarrassing position, being practically forced to give the 'barbarous rite' their protection and laying themselves open to the charge of unnecessarily aiding and abetting suicide. After much anxious discussion and consultation with some of the most learned pundits of the day, the Governor General issued instructions to all officers on April the 17th 1813. Even Ram Mohan Roy had hesitated to advise the immediate total abolition of *Sati* by Government. Bitterly opposed to the practice as he was, he yet dreaded compulsion in any form, trusting to persuasion and hoping that as education spread among his fellow-countrymen they would of their own free will abandon so inhuman a rite. Government's instructions to its officers accordingly were that though the practice could not be forcibly prevented where it was countenanced by Hindu religion and law, it should be

prohibited in all cases where it had not the sanction of Hindu law, that is, where the victim was unwilling. In January 1815 a further step was reached when the *Sati* of a widow with very young children was forbidden, while two years later a further Letter of Instruction was issued. Meanwhile it was a fact to which Government could not shut its eyes that, since the year 1813 when the first instructions to officers had been issued, the practice, so far from diminishing, had increased to an alarming extent. During the four years 1815 to 1818, in which statistics were taken, the number of *satis* was more than doubled. Government, deeply concerned in the matter, still hesitated, in view of the general prevalence and acceptance of the practice, to decree its abolition, Lord Amherst, the Governor General still trusting that 'general instruction and the unostentatious exertions of local officers would gradually bring about the extinction of this barbarous rite.' Lord William Bentinck, however, who succeeded Lord Amherst as Governor General in 1828 was of another opinion. While believing no less than Ram Mohan Roy, whom he personally consulted on the subject, in the advantages of persuation over force, he was unwilling to wait indefinitely for a reform that he considered urgently needed. Statistics still showed that, however much had been hoped from a gradual spread of education and a quiet insistence on the part of local officials, the practice was not

yet sensibly on the decline. The gradual enlightenment of the people would take years, perhaps generations, and hundreds of innocent human lives would meanwhile be wantonly sacrificed. To Lord William Bentinck's credit it will always be remembered that he boldly took the course he considered to be right, a course which, though it met with much opposition at the time, has received the full approval of posterity. On December the 4th 1829 was published the decree that finally abolished *Sati* throughout British India. Henceforward it was punishable as a criminal offence. All persons who aided or abetted it, whether the widow consented or not, were declared guilty of culpable homicide, and where violence was used against the victim it was in the power of the court to pass sentence of death. To Ram Mohan Roy, convinced of its wisdom and necessity, the measure was a welcome one and in the address presented by him and his friends to the Governor General shortly afterwards was expressed their 'deepest gratitude for the ever-lasting obligation conferred on the Hindu community at large,' for which they were 'at a loss to find language sufficiently indicative even of a small portion of the sentiments they desired to express.' The services that Ram Mohan had rendered in the cause of abolition were fully recognised. It was his insistence on the fact that *sati* was nowhere enjoined as a compulsory duty in the *Shastras* and that there

were passages in Hindu law entirely inconsistent with it, that induced the British Government to abandon in this one instance its position of non-interference with religious practices, and that made its abolition possible in the face of the very strong opposition it aroused.

Throughout all his efforts in the cause of education and the abolition of *sati*, Ram Mohan's quest after knowledge in matters of belief had been unceasing. Always with earnest and single mind he had sought the truth. To all that was best in Hinduisim he wholeheartedly adhered. It was only its errors and abuses against which he waged continual war. To all that was good and honourable and true in whatever religion it might be found he gave his allegiance. Once in the early days, his wife having overheard a long religious discussion between her husband and his friends, asked of him in bewilderment "Which religion then is the best and highest ?" For a moment struck by the directness of the question, he paused, then answered in the illustrative manner that so appeals to the eastern mind—"Cows are of different colours but the colour of the milk they give is the same. Different teachers have different opinions but the essence of every religion is to adopt the true faith and to live the faithful life." Of his largeheartedness and broadmindedness there are innumerable examples. Although not a Christian

he was keenly alive to the good work that the missionaries were doing among his fellow countrymen, and he gave his fullest sympathy and support to any society or any scheme that cordially co-operated in the great work of educating and raising the status of the Hindu community. With this object, in spite of his theological differences with it, he warmly supported the Presbyterian Church in its work in Calcutta and to him in some measure may be attributed the coming of Alexander Duff to India. The Church of Scotland Chaplain in Calcutta wrote home.—"Encouraged by the approbation of Ram Mohan I presented to the General Assembly of 1824 the petition and memorial which first directed the attention of the Church of Scotland to British India as a field for missionary exertions, on the plan that it is now so successfully following out, and to which this eminently gifted scholar, himself a Brahmin of high caste, had especially annexed his sanction."

On his arrival Alexander Duff at once met with the ready assistance of Ram Mohan who secured for him his first school house and his first scholars. On the opening day he himself was present to smooth away any difficulties that might arise and to endeavour to give the enterprise a favourable start. When the orthodox objected to his connection with a Presbyterian school, where the scriptures were read, Ram Mohan replied, "Christians have

studied the Hindu *shastras* and you know that they have not become Hindus. I myself have read the Koran again and again: but has that made me a Musulman? Nay, I have studied the whole Bible and you know I am not a Christian. Why then do you fear to read it? Read it and judge for yourselves." This was the attitude of impartiality that he always adopted. Let each man enquire and gain all the knowledge that he could, then judge for himself.

Ram Mohan was as fearless in supporting Government against the prejudices of his fellow-countrymen as he was in pointing out to the authorities any injustice that they committed or failed to remedy. While he strongly opposed Government over the famous Jury Act of 1827 which he considered introduced unjustifiable religious distinctions into the judicial system of the country, he was equally strong in his defence of the indigo planters of Bengal, whom, at the time of certain indigo labour difficulties, a section of the Indian community was vilifying. He at once intituted special and private inquiries on his own account into the circumstances, and having obtained a true version of the facts, he did not hesitate to proclaim them. He pointed out how widely indigo had benefited Bengal, and in how many places the plantations had brought a wide area of waste land under culti-

vation, adding that it was his mature opinion that 'the indigo planters have done more essential good to the natives of Bengal than any other class of persons.' 'This is a fact which I will not hesitate to affirm' he wrote 'whenever I may be questioned on the subject either in India or in Europe. I, at the same time, must confess that there are individuals of that class of society who either from hasty disposition or want of due discretion have proved obnoxious to those who expected milder treatment from them. But you are well aware that no general good can be effected without some partial evil, and in this instance I am happy to say that the former greatly preponderates over the latter. If any class of natives would gladly see them turned out of the country, it would be the Zemindars in general, since in many instances the planters have successfully protected the ryots against the tyranny and oppression of their landlord.'

Although for a time Ram Mohan joined the Unitarian Community, it was inevitable that he and his followers should form a separate community of their own. This came to pass on August the 28th 1828 when the first Theistic Church of modern India was founded. At the outset it was called simply *Brahma Sabha*, the Society of God. It was not until eighteen months later that the first building for the worship of the new society was dedicated in the presence of about five hundred Hindus of all classes.

The building was situated in the Chitpore Road and the names of the five 'Settlors' were given as 'Dwarkanath Tagore, Kaleenauth Roy, Prassunnakoomar Tagore, Ram Chunder Bidyabagish, and Ram Mohan Roy,' who transferred the Trust Property to three Trustees, Boykonto Nath Roy, Radha Persaud Roy and Rama Nauth Tagore. The trust deed dated January 8th 1830 formed the declaration of faith of the new community. By its terms the Trustees—

'Shall at all times permit the said building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises, with their appurtenances, to be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied and appropriated as and for a place of public meeting, of all sorts and descriptions of people, without distinction, as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner.

'For the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the universe, but not under or by any other name, designation or title, particularly used for and applied to, any particular Being or Beings, by any men or set of men whatsoever; and that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything, shall be admitted within the messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises: and that no sacrifice, offering or oblation of any kind of thing shall ever be permitted therein: and that

no animal or living creature shall within or on the said messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises, be deprived of life, either for religious purposes or for food.

'And that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary by any accident for the preservation of life) feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon.

'And that in conducting the said worship or adoration no object, animate or inanimate that has been, or is, or shall hereafter become, or be recognised, as an object of worship, by any man or set of men, shall be reviled or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to, either in preaching, praying or in the hymns, or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said messuage or building.

'And that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds.

'And also that a person of good repute and well-known for his knowledge, piety and morality be employed by the said Trustees as a resident superintendent and for the purpose of superintending the

worship so to be performed as is hereinbefore stated and expressed: that such worship be performed daily or at least as often as once in seven days.'

Its breadth of sympathy, its earnest endeavour after a greater sincerity and simplicity of faith and its strong desire to avoid the condemnation of others make this trust deed a remarkable document in an age of intense bigotry and bitter personal animosities.

The bitterness aroused against Ram Mohan in certain quarters was very great. Freedom of thought and freedom of speech were then in their infancy, and Hinduism, which had so long exacted unquestioning and blind obedience, mustered all the forces at its command against the reformer. Though still clinging to all that was best in Hinduism and observing all outward performances necessary to retain his caste, he had too effectively attacked the abuses that had become a part of it, to escape the hatred of the orthodox. The storm of opposition he aroused would have overwhelmed a weaker man. Though he had proved again and again how deep was his zeal for the public good, it was counted to him as nought compared with his break with the old shibboleths of his faith. So fierce was the feeling against him that latterly his life was in danger, and his friend Mr. Montgomery Martin relates how he took up his residence with him in order that he might watch over and protect him. For many years he

had been intending to visit England and convinced of the sincerity and fidelity of his following after the founding of the Brahma Sabha in 1830 he felt that at last the time had come. He was anxious not only to meet with the greatest and most advanced thinkers of the day, but above all to lay the case for progress on behalf of his fellow countrymen before the British people and the British Government. To break through centuries of tradition and brave the journey to England in those days needed no little courage. A letter of introduction given by a friend of his to the celebrated Jeremy Bentham gives an illuminating picture of the man and of the undertaking.

"If I were beside you and could explain matters fully," runs the letter, "you would comprehend the greatness of the undertaking—his going on board ship to a foreign and distant land, a thing hitherto not to be named among Hindus and least of all among Brahmans. His grand object besides the natural one of satisfying his own laudable spirit of enquiry has been to set a laudable example to his countrymen: and every one of the slow and gradual moves that he has made preparatory to his actually quitting India has been marked by the same discretion of judgment. He waited patiently until he had by perseverance and exertion acquired a little but respectable party of disciples. He talked of going to England from year to year since 1823, to familiarize the

minds of the orthodox by degrees to this step, and that his friends might in the meantime increase in numbers and confidence. He now judges that the time is come and that the public mind is equal for the exploit. The good which this excellent and extraordinary man has already effected by his writings and example cannot be told. But for his exertions *sati* would be in full vigour at the present day and the influence of bigotry in all its current force. He is withal one of the most modest men I had ever met with. It is no small compliment to such a man that even a Governor General like the present, who, though a man of the most honest intentions, suspects everybody and trusts no body, and who knows that Ram Mohan Roy greatly disapproves of many of the acts of Government should have shown him so much respect as to furnish him with introductions to friends of rank and political influence in England.'

He was careful, even when breaking so far with Brahmanical tradition as to cross the sea, to observe the laws of caste. He took with him on board the '*Albion*' by which he sailed in November the 19th 1830, two Hindu servants and two cows to supply him with milk, and throughout the voyage and during his stay in England he endeavoured to continue the strict Brahmanical observances which he had always carefully maintained.

Ram Mohan's three years in England were fraught with far-reaching results. His journey to Europe

marks an epoch in Indian development. Before him no member of the highest caste had dared to break the spell which the sea had laid on India. He was the first Brahman to cross the ocean and the first ever to be received by an English king. His name stands out as the pioneer of that long line of Indians who have since gone westwards to grasp in a day the knowledge that the west has taken such long years to come by. His bold example stirred his countrymen to follow in his wake, and served to bring them into closer touch with the great nation with whose destinies theirs have become so closely linked. The presence of such a brilliant personality as that of Ram Mohan brought home to the British people in a personal, intimate way, as nothing else could well have done, the piety, learning and dignity of their Indian fellow subjects. He in his own person won a new respect for his race among Englishmen. His tall dignified figure, familiar at court and in the highest circles of society, welcomed alike by the English Church and non-conformists, and equally at home in every circle of society, became in the eyes of those, who for the most part had never before seen an Indian at all, the embodiment of the Indian Empire. His learning and culture evoked astonishment and admiration. He was the complete refutation of what the untravelled western mind had popularly adopted as the Asiatic type. Ram Mohan Roy by his visit to England was not only enabled to inter-

pret England to India, he did the even greater service of interpreting India to the English. The west had long since gone to the East, eager to explore its mysteries and develop its resources. With Ram Mohan Roy the East for the first time broke through the bonds which had so long held it and began the journey to the west. He may well be called the first ambassador of India to the English people.

The great reformer was destined never again to return to his native land. His health gradually failed and though surrounded by all that modern science could provide, he slowly sank and died amid a faithful little company of friends at Bristol on the 27th September, 1833. Though his remains lie far from the land he strove so hard to serve his memory will ever live in the hearts of his grateful fellow-countrymen. Above his grave a memorial stone pays this last tribute—

BENEATH THIS STONE REST THE REMAINS OF

RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY BAHADOOR.

A CONSCIENTIOUS AND STEADFAST BELIEVER IN THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD, HE CONSECRATED HIS LIFE WITH ENTIRE DEVOTION TO THE WORKINGS OF THE DIVINE SPIRIT ALONE. TO GREAT NATURAL TALENTS HE UNITED A THOROUGH MASTERY OF MANY LANGUAGES, AND EARLY DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE GREATEST SCHOLARS OF HIS DAY. HIS

UNWEARIED LABOUR TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL, MORAL AND POLITICAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, HIS EARNEST ENDEAVOURS TO SUPPRESS IDOLATRY AND THE RITE OF SUTEE AND HIS CONSTANT ZEALOUS ADVOCACY OF WHATEVER TENDED TO ADVANCE THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE WELFARE OF MEN, LIVE IN THE GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COUNTRYMEN.

THIS TABLET

RECORDS THE SORROW AND PRIDE WITH WHICH HIS MEMORY IS CHERISHED BY HIS DESCENDANTS.

HE WAS BORN IN RADHANAGAR IN BENGAL IN 1774.* AND DIED AT BRISTOL 27TH SEPTEMBER, 1833.

* According to the most authoritative sources of information this should be 1772.

Hazi Mahomed Mohsin

HAJI MAHOMED MOHSIN.

1730-1812.

No Muhammadan in Bengal in the nineteenth century has left behind him a greater or more honoured name than Haji Mahomed Mohsin. By his learning, piety and philanthropy he set, while the century was yet young, a splendid example of all that a good citizen should be, not only to his own co-religionists but to all Bengal of whatever caste or creed. For over a hundred years the great Trust that he left behind him has kept his memory fresh, conferring immense benefits on succeeding generations and still continuing its educational and philanthropic work to-day. For all time it promises to remain a great and living memorial of his name.

The life of Haji Mahomed Mohsin was full of romance. His grandfather on his father's side was Agha Fazlullah, a merchant prince of Persia, who following in the wake of many of his adventurous compatriots had come to seek his fortune in India in the eighteenth century. For a time he resided at Murshidabad where the Viceroy of Bengal held court and where the English factory was slowly but surely establishing its position and increasing its scope and influence. Here Agha Fazlullah carried on an extensive mercantile business, but

finding the rising port of Hooghly a more convenient centre, he finally settled there with his son Haji Faizullah, who was already associated with him in his business undertakings. It was in Hooghly that the fortunes of his family were to reach their height, and with it that the name of his famous grandson was to be indissolubly associated for all time.

Already settled in Hooghly was one Agha Motaher, who, coming originally from Persia like Agha Fazlullah, had won his way at the court of Aurungzeb. That monarch had conferred upon him extensive jagirs in Jessore and other places in Bengal, and Agha Motaher, eager to take possession, finally himself set out from Delhi for the eastern province on the outskirts of the empire, where so many of his countrymen had won fame and fortune before him. So well did he manage his newly acquired lands that he soon became one of the wealthiest men in the province. He had made his headquarters at Hooghly and there, like a good Muhammadan, his desire in prosperity, was to build a mosque that should be worthy of his fortunes. Already there was a fine Imambara there, built by Murshid Kuli Khan, Viceroy of Bengal, but it had fallen into disrepair. It occupied a splendid site on the river bank, close by the Fort and the Portuguese Factory, and commanding wide reaches of the river to the north and south. Agha Motaher

resolved to rebuild it and, obtaining permission, began the construction of the building which after many additions and improvements has survived as the great Imambara of to-day.

In the prosperity of Agha Motaher there was one thing lacking. He had no son. For many years he was childless and it was only in old age that a daughter was born to him. Round this only child, named Manu Jan Khanum, all his affections centred, and dying when she was only seven years old he left her all his property. A curious story is told of the device he adopted to keep the contents of his will secret during his lifetime. Presenting a massive golden amulet to the child, he told her that it would prove of immense value to her after his death but that it was on no account to be opened while he lived. The child being of such tender years, others saw that the great man's instructions were implicitly obeyed, and when the amulet was opened after his death it was found to contain his will whereby he left her all that he possessed. No provision appears to have been made for his widow, probably because she already had property of her own. She seems at once to have set up an independent household on her own account, and shortly afterwards married Haji Fazlullah, the son of Agha Fazlullah, her late husband's friend and compatriot. The only child of this marriage was the famous Haji Mahomed Mohsin.

Born in 1730 A.D., Haji Mahomed Mohsin was eight years younger than his half-sister, Manu Jan Khanum. From the first she loyally played the part of elder sister towards him, watching over his earliest years with tenderest devotion. Brought up together in the household of Haji Faizullah, they were inseparable companions, and the strong and deep affection that always existed between them was one of the first recollections of their childhood's days. The influence for good that Manu Jan Khanum exercised over him left its mark in after life and Mahomed Mohsin never forgot the debt he owed to her.

Following the usual Muhammadan custom of those days, Mahomed Mohsin early began to prosecute his studies in Arabic and Persian. Here again he had the advantage of his sister's guidance, for she had already acquired considerable proficiency in those studies while he was still an infant, and when he was old enough to be placed under the eare of a tutor, she continued her studies as his fellow pupil. Their tutor was a Persian gentleman, Agha Shirazi by name, who combined with great learning much worldly wisdom and experience, having travelled in many countries after having left his home in Shiraz and before finally settling down in Hooghly. Often when lessons were done, he was wont to relate to his pupils stories of his adventures and of the wonders of foreign lands and thus early Mahomed Mohsin became inspired with that desire for travel which in

after years he was to find such opportunity to gratify. Finally, to complete his education Mahomed Mohsin was sent to Murshidabad, there to learn all that one of the most famous Muktabs of the time could teach him of the Koran and the classics, in which he had been so well grounded by Agha Shirazi.

After finishing his studies at Murshidabad, Mahomed Mohsin returned to his sister's house at Hooghly. The same friendship as in their younger days still existed between them and it was shortly after his return that Mahomed Mohsin's watchful care and devotion were the means of rendering her a great service. A woman of her position and wealth was not without enemies, and among a certain number of those who might hope to benefit by her death a plot was formed to poison her. This plot Mahomed Mohsin had the good fortune to discover and was thus able to save his sister by warning her in time of the design against her life. So great, however, was the animosity roused against Mohomed Mohsin amongst the conspirators that he thought it advisable to leave Hooghly for a time. This he was able to do as his sister was about to marry and so would not be left without a protection in his absence.

When Haji Mahomed Mohsin left Hooghly for the second time he was some thirty-two years old. Although he had always had a great desire to travel he had felt that his first duty was to the sister to

whom he owed so much. Now that he was free, however, he lost no time in setting out to see the world. After the sheltered life that he had hitherto led in his carefully tended house on the banks of the Hooghly, the hardships of the road must have been a rough experience. In those days of slow and tedious travel a journey even to the imperial city of Delhi along the beaten track was no light undertaking. Mahomed Mohsin, however, hearing good accounts of Manu Jan Khanum's happiness and safety was eager to set out into the unknown in search of learning, and adventure. Blest with splendid physique, his simple living and hard training had endowed him with excellent health, while his skill as a swordsman and as a wrestler was to become famous during his travels throughout India. It was always said of him, however, that his great strength was never used for oppression or in an unjust cause, while it was ever ready to defend the weak or the helpless. For his penmanship he was already noted and much of his leisure time was devoted to copying the Koran. So beautifully were these copies penned that some of them are said to have sold for 1000 Rs. It is also said that he made no fewer than seventy-two copies, truly a Herculean task, all of them being given away when finished to the poor and suffering.

After a brief halt at Murshidabad, he travelled up country visiting all the famous towns of

northern India. It was a critical moment in the history of the Moghul empire. Everywhere there was a spirit of unrest. The old empire that had so long maintained its nominal grasp over all northern India was rapidly falling to decay. Internal dissensions had weakened its hold, while on the one hand the Mahrattas and on the other a crowd of western nations were knocking at its gates. It was a fascinating drama that was played before the eyes of Haji Mahomed Mohsin as he travelled from city to city, showing him the beginning of that great transition which was to change the face of Hindustan.

Not content with his Indian experiences Mahomed Mohsin travelled far beyond the limits of the Moghul empire. Reaching Arabia, he made pilgrimages to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, thus gaining for himself the title of *Haji* which has ever since been coupled with his name. Continuing his journey he made his way through Persia, Turkey and Egypt performing pilgrimages to many of the most sacred Moslem shrines, his visits to them strengthening the strain of piety and religious enthusiasm which had always been inherent in his nature. At Najaf, then a famous seat of oriental learning, he spent some time enjoying the society of the company of scholars, whom the fame of the place had attracted there.

For twenty-seven years he continued his travels in Hindustan, Arabia, Persia, and Central Asia, meeting

with many adventures and enduring many hardships but never losing his passion for the road. Visiting all the famous places of the Moslem world he added greatly to his already large store of knowledge, acquiring fresh wisdom and breadth of view from each new source. Travelling as he did over so extended an area and during so many years, his fame spread far and wide and, preceding him on his homeward way through India, prepared everywhere for him a great reception.

It was not until he had reached his sixtieth year and age was beginning to tell even upon his iron constitution that he finally decided to terminate his travels and return home. Making his way slowly across northern India he came at last to Lucknow, which, since the best days of Delhi were already past, had become the chief centre of Moslem thought and learning. Here the fame of his wisdom and erudition had preceded him and he was welcomed by all the distinguished men of the day who were then gathered there. The Nawab Asaf-ud-dowlah was himself a patron of letters and in Haji Mahomed Mohsin he found a scholar worthy of respect, and one who would be an ornament of his court. But Mahomed Mohsin, though tempted by every inducement of wealth and honours to remain had no ambition to figure among the crowd of satellites at the Nawab's court and after a short stay in Lucknow he returned at last to Murshidabad whence he had

set out so many years before. Here in this seat of learning, it seems, he determined to settle down to spend his declining years. But fate willed otherwise.

During his long absence there had been great changes in his old home at Hooghly. His sister Manu Jan Khanum had married her cousin Mirza Salahuddin Mahomed Khan, nephew of Agha Motaher, whom he had followed from Persia. The marriage was an extremely happy one, Mirza Salahuddin devoting himself to the management of his wife's large estates and entering with her into all her plans for their improvement and the welfare of all those connected with them. In Hooghly itself where Manu Jan Khanum had been known from childhood, they were universally respected and beloved. The Imambara that her father had commenced, she and her husband made their special care, adding to and completing what he had begun, while close by, for the benefit of those who came to worship, Mirza Salahuddin established a hât which is still known by his name.

Their short spell of married happiness, however, was brought to a sudden close by Mirza Salahuddin's untimely death, while still in the prime of life. His loss was a great blow to Manu Jan Khanum who had learned to rely upon him in conducting the business of her estates. Though there were not wanting many who aspired to fill his place, she remained faithful to his memory keeping the control of her

affairs in her own hands and showing great tact and ability in the management of them. It was but natural that a widow of such wealth and position should be sought in marriage, and Manu Jan Khanum was not without suitors. Among them was Nawab Khan Jahan Khan of Hooghly but, suspecting his motives, she replied to the messengers whom he sent with the offer of his hand, 'Affection is greater than wealth. You have not been able to offer me the greater, how therefore can I give you the less?'

With advancing years, however, the management of her vast estates became too heavy a burden for her. Her thoughts naturally turned to the step-brother, the companion of her youth, from whom she had been so long parted, and she resolved to summon him from Murshidabad and entrust the whole of her property to his management. It was only on her earnest solicitations that Mahomed Mohsin was prevailed upon to leave his retreat at Murshidabad. Feeling that it was his duty to come to her assistance, he gave up the life of study and seclusion that he had marked out for himself, and came to Hooghly to undertake the arduous duties of manager of his half-sister's great estates. The years that followed must have been busy ones for Mahomed Mohsin, very different from those that he had spent wandering from city to city with no worldly cares to harass him. The knowledge of the help he was enabled to render to his sister and the pleasure of her society were,

however, sufficient compensation. Manu Jan Khanum, relieved of all anxiety as to her worldly affairs, devoted her remaining years to charity and prayer, tenderly cared for by Mahomed Mohsin whose earliest years she herself had so carefully watched over. She died at the age of eighty-one in 1803 A.D. leaving as the last and greatest proof of her affection for Mahomed Mohsin a will bequeathing him the whole of her estate.

It was thus not until Haji Mahomed Mohsin had reached the age of seventy-three that he became possessed of the great wealth which he was to put to so good a use. He had never married and the death of his half-sister left him without near relatives. There is something pathetic in the figure of this old man in its utter loneliness, which the great wealth that had suddenly come to him but served to accentuate. There lived with him, it is true, the two companions whom he had brought with him from Murshidabad, Rajib Ali Khan and Shakir Ali Khan, but how little they were truly his friends subsequent events were only too clearly to prove. But undismayed by the responsibilities before him, Mahomed Mohsin set himself to administer the estate wisely and well. So far as he was personally concerned, this new access of wealth made but little change. He lived as he had lived before, the same simple frugal life of the traveller and the scholar that he had always known. But in so

far as it enabled him to widen the sphere of his charities and kindly deeds, his inheritance was welcome to him. Almost the whole of his large income he spent in charity. Not content with relieving those cases of sickness or distress that came to his notice, he made it his personal concern to seek out those who needed help. It is said that he was even wont to disguise himself and wander through the poorest quarters of the town seeking out 'the famished beggar, the starving widow and the helpless orphan,' and relieving their distress. Though a strict and orthodox Muhammadan, he took no account of caste or creed when it was a case of helping suffering humanity. Helplessness and poverty alone were sufficient passwords to his large and generous heart. Many stories are told of his magnanimity and generosity. Once, it is said, a thief broke into his house and entered his sleeping apartment at dead of night. Mahomed Mohsin, waking opportunely, sprang up and seized the thief, quickly overpowering him. But recognising him as a resident of the place who had fallen on evil days, he released him and upbraided him for his unworthy conduct. Shamed and penitent, the thief implored his pardon. Mahomed Mohsin not only set him free but gave him money to tide over his immediate difficulties. So astonished was the thief and so grateful for the generosity shown him that even though it was to his own detriment he could not refrain from relating

the incident in after days, always maintaining that it was Mahomed Mohsin's magnanimous conduct that had saved him from sinking into still lower depths of crime.

Mahomed Mohsin, however, was not content with these small acts of charity. He was anxious that his great wealth should be put to good uses after his death, which he knew now could not be far off. With this object, on April the 26th, 1806 he signed a Deed of Trust, setting apart the whole of his income for charitable purposes in perpetuity. This deed is now preserved among the treasures of the Imambara at Hooghly, on one of the walls of which facing the river, a copy of it in English has been inscribed, so that all who pass may read of the charity of Mahomed Mohsin. The will runs—

'I, Hajee Mahummud Mohsin, son of Hajee Fyzoollah, son of Agha Fuzloollah, inhabitant of Bundur Hugli, in the full possession of all my senses and faculties, with my own free will and accord, do make the following correct and legal declaration. That the Zumeendaree of Purgannah Qismut Sueedpore, *&c.* appendant to Zillah Jusur, and Purgunnah Sobhnal also appendant to the Zillah aforesaid, and one house situated in Hooghly, (known and distinguished as Imambara) and Imambazar, and Hat [Market] also situated in Hooghly, and all the goods and chattels appertaining to the Imambara agreeably to a separate list; the whole of which

have devolved on me by inheritance, and of which the proprietary possession I enjoy up to this present time; as I have no children, nor grandchildren, nor other relatives, who would become my legal heirs :—and as I have full wish and desire to keep up and continue the usages and charitable expenditures [*Murasumo Ukhrajat-i-husneh*] of the *Fateha* &c., of the Huzrat [on whom be blessings and rewards] which have been the established practice of the family, I therefore hereby give purely for the sake of God the whole of the above property, with all its rights, immunities, and privileges, whole and entire, little or much, in it, with it, or from it, and whatever [by way of appendage] might arise from it, relate or belong to it—as a permanent Appropriation for the following expenditures ; —and have hereby appointed Rujub Uli Khan, son of Shekh Mohummud Sadiq, and Shakir Uli Khan, son of Ahmud Khan, who have been tried and approved by me, as possessing understanding, knowledge, religion and probity *Mutwallies* (trustees or superintendents) of the said *Wuqf* or Appropriation, which I have given in trust to the above two individuals—that, aiding and assisting each other, they might consult, advise and agree together in the joint management of the business of the said appropriation, in manner as follows :—that the aforenamed Mutwallies, after paying the revenues of Government, shall divide the remaining

produce of the Muhals aforenamed into nine shares of which three shares they shall disburse in the observance of the *Fateha* of Huzrut Syud-Kayunat (head of the creation) the last of the Prophets, and of the sinless Imams (on all of whom be the blessings and peace of God)—and in the expenditures appertaining to the *Ushra* of *Mohurrumool-huram* (ten days of the sacred Mohurrum), and all other blessed days of feasts and festivals ; and in the repairs of the Imambara, and Cemetery ; TWO SHARES the Mutwallies, in equal portion, shall appropriate to themselves for their own expenses,—and FOUR SHARES shall be disbursed in the payment of the establishment, and of those whose names are inserted in the separate list signed and sealed by me. In regard to the daily expenses, monthly stipends of the stipendiaries, respectable men, *peadas* and other persons, who at this present moment stand appointed, the Mutwallies aforenamed *after me*, have full power to retain, abolish or discharge them as it may appear to them most fit and expedient. I have publicly committed the Appropriation to the charge of the two abovenamed individuals. In the event of a Mutwalli finding himself unable to conduct the business of the Appropriation, he may appoint any one whom he may think most fit and proper, as a Mutwalli to act in his behalf. For the above reasons this document is given in writing this 19th day of Bysakh, in the year of Hijree 1221, corresponding with the

Bengal year 1213, that whenever it be required it many prove a legal deed.'

Haji Mahomed Mohsin lived for six years after making this truly noble disposition of his property. For his own personal use he had reserved only so much property as would bring him in about one hundred rupees a month. Upon this small sum he was content to live, busily employed in setting the great Trust in order so that it might be wisely and well administered after his death. It is difficult to imagine a more admirable close to the end of a long and well-spent life than this chosen by Mahomed Mohsin. Rich beyond the dreams of avarice, he voluntarily gave up every thing, anxious only to see before his death the great Charitable Trust that he had founded so well administered that it might never, for all time to come, fail in the great objects for which he had designed it. Revered and respected in life, he thus raised up to himself while he yet lived a monument more lasting than brick and stone, a monument that will last for all time and which already in the century that has passed has caused so many generations to bless his name.

In 1812 Haji Mahomed Mohsin died at the ripe old age of eighty-two. He was buried with all the simplicity that he himself desired in the garden adjoining the Imambara which he had so splendidly endowed. He lies close by his well-loved step sister, Manu Jan Khanum to whom he owed both

his early training and the great inheritance of his later years. Near them are two other graves, those of Manu's husband Mirza Salahuddin Mahomed Khan and of her father Agha Motaher. No fitting monument or inscription marked their graves for nearly a hundred years. It was only on the centenary of the foundation of the great Trust that a handsome canopy was erected over them as a fitting outward symbol of the affection and gratitude with which in spite of the lapse of time so many still regard their memory.

It is sad to turn from the noble and pious life of Haji Mahomed Mohsin to the meanness and treachery of those who he had trusted. To Rajib Ali Khan and Shakir Ali Khan, he had given innumerable proofs of his friendship, lavishing his affection upon them in life and generously providing for them after his death. By the terms of the will, the administration of the Trust Fund, according to the conditions laid down, was left entirely in their hands as Mutwalis. The income from the property was to be divided into nine shares. Three shares were to be devoted for ever to religious observances and the maintenance of the Imambara, four shares were to be devoted to non-religious charitable purposes to be chosen by the Mutwallis for the time being, while the remaining two shares were to be their personal property. The two Mutwalis nominated by Mahomed Mohsin were to be allowed to appoint

their own successors. Mahomed Mohsin had thus provided generously for his two friends, but so far short did they fall of his trust and confidence that they endeavoured to conceal the will and take possession of the whole property. Sakir Ali Khan dying soon after Mahomed Mohsin, appointed his son Baker Ali Khan his successor as Mutwalli, while Rajib Ali the other original Mutwali not long afterwards also appointed his son Wasiq Ali Khan to succeed him. The two sons of the first two Mutwallis thus reigned in their stead. So scandalous was their management of the Trust that the Board of Revenue was soon forced to interfere under the Provisions of Regulation XIX of 1810. The finding of the court of Sudder Dewani Adaulat before which the case came, bears striking testimony to their mismanagement. 'The proper objects of the endowment were neglected,' it ran, 'and the Government revenue fell into arrears, while the income was spent on quarrels between the managers, bribes to the police and amins, and gifts to the manager's relatives. They, moreover, in order to increase their own profits at the expense of the Trust, forged a perpetual lease in their own favour and that of their relatives, purporting to have been executed by Haji Mahomed Mohsin before the deed of foundation.' By an order of November the 16th 1815, Syed Ali Akbar Khan was appointed manager by Government to act in conjunction with the two Mutwalis and to set the affairs of

the Trust on a satisfactory footing. Anxious to interfere as little as possible with the intentions of the original founder Government adopted this only as a temporary measure, and a few months later again restored full management to the two Mutwallis certain rules for their guidance being laid down. They were not long, however, in proving how little they deserved this clemency on the part of Government, continuing their course of peculation and embezzlement with renewed vigour. Finally in 1818, the Collector of Jessore in whose district large portion of the Trust property lay, ejected them from the management with the approval of the Board of Revenue. The Mutwalis made every effort to retain so profitable a stewardship, bringing their case repeatedly before the courts. On the decision of the Sessions Judge of Hooghly being given against them, they appealed to Calcutta and finally to the Privy Council. The original judgment was, however, consistently upheld and its confirmation by the Privy Council in 1835 at length set the matter ar rest.

Since March 1817 the control of the Mahomed Mohsin Trust estate has thus been in the hands of Government. In order to fulfil the original intentions of the founder as far as possible, a Mutwali was appointed to have charge of all that concerned the Imambara and the religious side of the endowment, Syed Ali Khan Bahadur being nominat-

ed as the first Mutwali under the new order. In 1821 the property of the Trust was sold in *putni* tenures, the sum obtained amounting to upwards of six lacs of rupees. As the appeal of the former Mutwalis was still before the courts it was made a condition of the sale that, in the event of the case being lost, the purchase money should be restored with interest. The sum obtained was therefore invested in government security so as to be available in case of need.

The case having been finally decided in 1835, in favour of the action taken by Government, new regulations were drawn up confirming the Trust and creating the 'Mahomed Mohsin Education Endowment Fund.' The Government of India made known its decision in the following terms—

'The Governor-General in Council, deeming himself to have succeeded to the full authority and power assigned by Haji Mahomed Mohsin to the Mutwalis considers it to be entirely in his power to determine upon the appropriation of the funds, subject of course to the condition of adhering as closely as possible to the wishes of the testator in points on which they have been declared.

'Now it appears that the growing income from the Jessore estate was the only fund in the testator's contemplation, and the expenses of the Imambara, the Mutwali's allowances, with the pensions and establishment, are charges specifically

upon that income, which is estimated by the sub-committee at Hooghly to yield the sum of Rs. 45,000 per annum.

'The Governor-General adverting to the conditions of the will resolves that three-ninths of the income from the Zemindaries shall permanently be assigned for the current expenses of the Imambara. Of the two-ninths of the income assigned to the Mutwalis but which are now at the disposal of the Government, the Governor-General in Council asigns one-ninth to the agent or Muwtali appointed by the Government, but he does not deem it necesary to appoint a second Mutwali or to appropriate the second ninth share assigned by the testator to the co-trustee nominated in the original will. This ninth, therefore, will be available for general purposes of a benevolent nature along with the surplus fund to which I shall presently advert.

'The four-ninths of the Zemindari income appropriated by the testator to pensions and establishments must remain burthened with these charges, but as many of the pensions must have lapsed, the Governor-General in Council considers that the income arising from such lapses may be fairly added to the surplus bund appropriable to general purposes. The expenses of the hospital will, however, remain a permanent charge under this head, but there appears to be an expense incurred for education at present which will be of course merged in the original fund.

'In pursuance of the principles above laid down there remain at the disposal of government for general purposes of a beneficent nature, first, one-ninth of the annual income of the Zemindaries; second, the lapsed pensions; and third, the entire amount arising from the interest of the accumulated fund now invested in promissory notes of the Government.

'The Governor-General in Council is of opinion that, after setting apart from the last mentioned fund such amount as may be necessary to provide appropriate buildings, including the charge of rebuilding or repairing the Imambara and other religious edifices, if it should be found necessary to renew these, the entire remainder should be considered as a Trust Fund, the interest of which with other items specified, may be appropriated to purposes of education by the foundation of a collegiate institution imparting instructions of all kinds in the higher departments of education according to the principles heretofore explained.

'In this manner the Governor-General in Council conceives that the pious and beneficent purposes of the founder of the Hooghly endowment will best be fulfilled and under the latitude given for the determinations of the specific uses to which any surplus funds of the estate are to be appointed, he cannot see that the assignment of the surplus which has arisen in this instance, partly from the delay in consequence

of litigation, and partly from the fines realised from the mode of management, adapted to purposes of education in the manner stated, will be any deviation from the provision of the dead.'

In the following year the Hooghly College was opened with the surplus funds at the disposal of Government. The College was affiliated to the Calcutta University and was open to members of all religious communities, the building acquired for it being the fine house on the banks of the Hooghly originally built by the famous General Perron. So great was its success that, within three days of its opening, its students numbered twelve hundred in the English and three hundred in the Oriental Department. For thirty-seven years, the College was maintained by the Mohsin Fund. The proportion of Muhammadan students, however, was eventually considered too small to justify the expenditure of so large a portion of the Trust Fund upon it, and the maintenance of the Hooghly College was otherwise provided for. The income from the Trust Fund thus released was set apart, partly for the support of Madrassas at Dacca, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Hooghly, and partly for the assistance of Muhammadan students, by granting them two-thirds of their fees at any English school or college in Bengal. Whereas the income from the Trust Fund in 1835 only amounted to 45,000 Rs. it now amounts to over a lac and a half, and administered on these lines, the

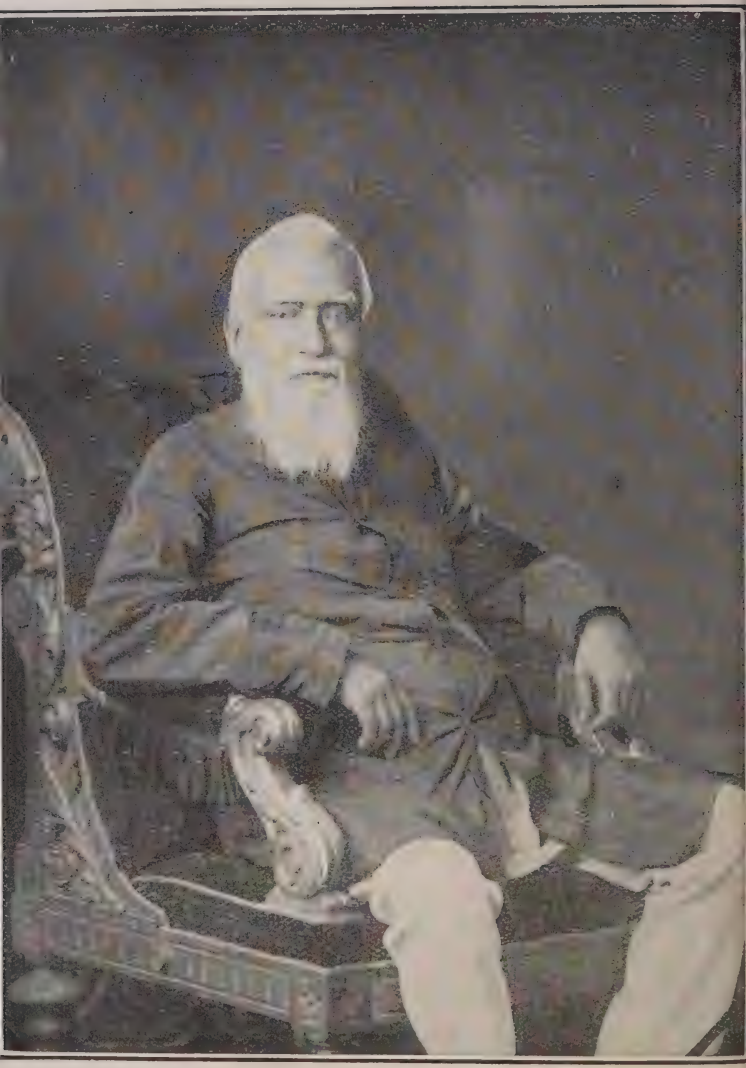
benefit which it has conferred upon the cause of education among the Muhammadan community in Bengal is incalculable.

In 1848 two lacs of rupees were spent on enlarging and improving the Imambara itself, when the building, after many alterations since the days of its first construction by Agha Motaher, finally assumed the form which it beats to-day. It is a magnificent structure on the banks of the Hooghly, commanding splendid reaches of the river on either hand. Facing northward over the river the walls bear the full text of Mahomed Mohsin's will inscribed upon them, a striking inscription of a great gift. The inner courtyard, out of which opens the Imambara itself, has a charming air of grandeur and repose, while from the turrets that tower above it a magnificent view of the Imambara and of the surrounding country is obtained. Everywhere within the building itself texts from the Koran are engraved upon the walls, while many times a day the sound of prayer ascends. In one corner of the quadrangle is the Hospital supported by the funds, while in another are the rooms of the Mutwali, whose sole duty now lies within the Imambara in maintaining the religious observances enjoined by the trust. In 1867 a committee under Section 7 of Act XX of that year was appointed to supervise the management of the Funds allotted for this purpose, which amount to three-ninths of the income of the whole estate. The Mutwali appointed

by Government continues to draw his one-ninth share, while all the remainder of the estate is administered by the Collector of Khulna* for charitable and educational purposes.

Thus this magnificent charitable Trust Fund remains after more than one hundred years, fulfilling the intentions of its founder and conferring immense benefits on his co-religionists and fellow-countrymen. Rescued by Government from dissipation and embezzlement on the part of those who should have been its faithful guardians, it has been placed in safe keeping so that for all time it may serve the great purposes for which it was designed. No man could have raised a greater and more noble monument to himself than that which bears the name of Haji Mahomed Mohsin.

* The District of Khulna was formed out of portions of the Districts of Jessore and the 24-Perganas 1882.



Ramtanu Lahiri

RAMTANU LAHIRI.

1813—1898.

Among the many names associated with the great Renaissance in Bengal during the nineteenth century that of Ramtanu Lahiri bears an honoured place. Foremost in every good work he set by his daily life and conduct a shining example to all those who with him were treading the difficult paths of moral and social progress. His intense lovableness was the secret of the great influence he wielded, his saintly life and whole-hearted devotion to the interests of his fellow-countrymen never failing to leave a deep impression on all those who came in contact with him. Though he courageously broke away from the old beliefs and the old creeds, it was only in so far as he held that they failed in the light of modern knowledge and investigation. All that was best in them he was eager to retain. His was no purely destructive creed ruthlessly sweeping away all that had been held sacred for generations. This was the natural tendency of the sudden awakening that had come to Bengal in the middle of the nineteenth century, but from the first Ramtanu threw the whole weight of his influence on the side of moderation. He was wise enough to see that no nation, enervated by long sleep, can spring to life, at once capable and

equipped to guide its own destiny with sure and steady hand. While none was more eager than he to step forward boldly on the road of progress, he realised to the full the supreme importance of taking no false step. In quietness and in confidence, in slow, carefully-considered advancement lay the strength of the new nation that was springing into birth.

Ramtanu Lahiri came of a family of the highest caste, a Brahmin of the Brahmins, a Kulin of long descent. For several generations his ancestors had been honourably connected with the important family of the Maharajas of Nadia near Krishnagar. His great-grandfather, his grandfather and his uncle were all Dewans in their service, while his own father, a younger son, was the Dewan of two of the younger scions of the same family. Such continuity of service speaks much for the loyalty of Ramtanu's immediate ancestors, while the memories that still survive of many of them show them to have been men of singular piety and unworldliness. It is told of Ramtanu's great-grandfather, Ramgovinda, that when a division of the family property took place, everything that was of great value was placed in one share while in the other was placed only the family *shalgram* and some *debattar* land. Ramgovinda, when asked to make his choice, unhesitatingly chose the latter, willing to face poverty rather than relinquish his tutelary deity and all that it represented. His grandson Ramkrishna, the father of Ramtanu,

inherited his pious nature. His last days he devoted almost entirely to religious exercises, strictly observing every orthodox Brahminical rule of life. His simple, well-ordered household was one of Ramtanu's earliest recollections and it had an influence up on him that remained with him through life.

Ramkrishna Lahiri had eight sons and two daughters of whom Ramtanu was the fifth son and seventh child. His mother was Jagaddhatri Devi, daughter of Dewan Radhakanta Rai of Krishnagar whose position was second only to that of the Maharaja himself. Ramkrishna, however, who was only Dewan to the Tila Babus, a younger branch of the family, never commanded a large salary and the education of his numerous family left him in straitened circumstances. His eldest son Kesava Lahiri was appointed to the sheristadarship of the Judge's court at Jessore and with true filial devotion he made his first object the rendering of help to his father in bringing up his large family. To him Ramtanu owed much of his early education, and he always spoke of him with the greatest admiration and respect as a perfect type of devoted son and brother. Many little incidents are recorded of his life showing his unselfishness and willingness to help others. He it was who took Ramtanu to live with him and personally superintended his earliest studies in the intervals of his own heavy official work. Thus the first years of Ramtanu's life

were surrounded by good influences which were to bear fruit in after years.

Ramtanu was born in 1813 at village Baruihuda in Krishnagar in the house of his mother's family. At the age of five he began his education in one of the local patshalas, then generally located in the house of the most important man in the village. They were schools of the most primitive description, the guru like his pupils seated on the ground, and the latter writing on plantain leaves for paper with pointed sticks for pens. The teaching was of the most elementary character, and with no terror of an inspecting officer hanging over his head, the guru taught as much or as little as he pleased, the whole system being very different from that which came into force after the awakening of Bengal when the greatest minds of the day had devoted themselves to the cause of education. In 1826, Ramtanu's elder brother Kesava took him to reside with him at Chetla, a suburb of Calcutta, in order that he might secure a better education than his native village could provide. Kesava's resources, however, were limited, his salary being only Rs. 30 a month and it was therefore impossible for him to bear the expense of sending Ramtanu to an English school. At first he had to be content with giving him what instruction he could in his own spare time, teaching him Arabic, Persian and a little English. With only the early mornings and late evenings at his disposal, however, the whole of the day being

occupied with his office work, it was not possible for him to devote the attention to Ramtanu's education that he wished, and from the first it had been his great desire to get him admitted as a free student into the institution which was then known as the Society's School, but which afterwards bore and still bears the name of the Hare School.

David Hare, a Scotsman who had come out to Calcutta as a watchmaker in 1800 at the age of twenty-five, had become one of the pioneers of education in Bengal. A man of no great education himself, he had become firmly impressed with the belief that a sound English education was essential to the real intellectual development of Bengal. Associated with some of the leading Bengali gentlemen of the day, among whom one of the foremost was Ram Mohan Ray, he succeeded in starting an English school for Indian students in the centre of Calcutta. The Hindu College was opened on the 20th of January, 1817, and in the following year a society was formed for opening English and Vernacular schools in various parts of Calcutta. Selling out his business, he bought a piece of land sufficient for his support, and being thus free from worldly cares, he was able to devote his whole attention to his pet scheme of education. Under his energetic guidance other schools were soon founded in various parts of Calcutta and so great was Mr. Hare's interest in their welfare that it was his practice to go round to visit them in his palanquin

every morning, ending with the Hindu College. He was looked upon with the greatest love and reverence by the students, many of whom, too poor to pay for it, owed their education entirely to his generosity and that of his friends whose interest he had aroused. The story of Ramtanu's appointment as a free scholar gives some insight into the difficulties with which Mr. Hare had to contend.

As soon as it became known that he kept a number of free scholarships in his own gift, he became pestered with applications for them. Kesava had become acquainted with one Gour Mohan Vidyalankar, a pundit in one of the David Hare schools, and he enlisted his help in endeavouring to secure one of the free scholarships for Ramtanu. Gour Mohan took the latter to Mr. Hare's house, but this first visit did not prove a success. Besieged by applications for the free scholarships, Mr. Hare had become suspicious of the good faith of many of the applicants, and he refused at first to entertain Gour Mohan's request. The latter, however, evidently knowing the kindness of Mr. Hare's nature, instructed Ramtanu to remain in waiting outside the great man's gate, and to repeat his request, running beside his palanquin every time he entered or left his house. For two months Ramtanu remained a supplicant, poor and in straitened circumstances, but hopeful and persistent. It was truly a triumph of importunity, for Mr. Hare at last convinced of

Ramtanu's sincere desire for an English education appointed him to a free scholarship in the Hare school.

Ramtanu at this time was thirteen years of age. His elder brother, having removed from Calcutta, a home was found for him in the house of Ram Kanta Khan, a cousin of his father's, at Shampukur. Here he met with much kindness, and enjoyed the companionship of Digambar Mittra, the future Raja, who had been entered at the Hare school on the same day as himself. The moral atmosphere of Calcutta was unfortunately then at its lowest ebb. The young men of the city had begun to throw off the restraints which had so long held them in check under the strict Hindu code, and were indulging in every form of vice. Retaining the outward observances of their religion, they were shamelessly abandoning its principles and living lives that outwardly conformed but inwardly violated every moral code. It was infinitely to Ramtanu's credit that he passed unscathed through these evil influences among which as a student he was necessarily thrown.

After two years at the Hare School, Ramtanu had pursued his studies with such diligence that he won a scholarship at the Hindu College. This College had been established in 1817 as the outcome of the exertions of David Hare, Baidyanath Mukherjee, Ram Mohan Roy and others, supported by the Chief Justice of Bengal, Sir Hyde East. It

had originated in the desire to give the rising generation a thorough education on western lines. Government had at first intentionally avoided introducing anything of the kind in its sincere desire to avoid the appearance of forcing a new system of education against their will upon the Indian people. So far from desiring to urge anything that might be opposed to their wishes or antagonistic to their train of thought, Government had endeavoured to encourage education on eastern lines. Warren Hastings with this object had established the Calcutta Madrassa as early as 1781 for the study of Arabic and Persian, and more recent efforts had been made in the same direction. But already the spirit of change and unrest was abroad. A feeling of revolt against the old creeds had grown up, and freedom of thought was making itself felt as it had never hitherto done in the history of Hinduism. Though as yet confined to the few, this spirit of progress was animating some of the most brilliant and able men of the rising generation. To such as these, education on western lines appeared the first essential. While fully alive to the many merits of the old regime, they were convinced that western modes of thought, western knowledge of science and western insistence on moral excellence could alone breathe new life into the decaying structure of modern Hindu society.

For five years Ramtanu remained at the Hindu college under influences which left their mark upon

his character. Derozio was then at the full height of his brief and meteoric career, exercising a sway over the minds of the rising generation of Bengali students that it is difficult to exaggerate. Actually connected with the College for only three brief years, his influence was felt even more in the social gatherings of students at his own house than in his ordinary class instructions. At these social gatherings, which met after school hours, readings in poetry, literature and moral philosophy took place. Every subject under the sun was open for discussion. Yet while freedom of thought and freedom of speech were the watchwords of these meetings, Derozio enforced a strict moral code among his pupils, insisting upon the necessity of straightness in word and deed and above all of truth in all the dealings of daily life. Coming so suddenly after centuries of unquestioning acceptance of the old faith, it was only to be anticipated that some members of the little group of reformers should be carried away by the breadth and depth of their new ideas. 'Down with idolatry,' 'down with superstition' had become the cries of a section of the young Bengal party and though the old regime was strong enough to secure the dismissal of Derozio from the Hindu College in 1831, and practically to excommunicate Ram Mohan Ray, who had founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828, it was impossible for it to stem the rising tide of free thought and impatience of the old restraints.

Through all these momentous years Ramtanu had remained at the Hindu College. In 1833 he became a teacher there on the modest salary of thirty rupees a month. Busy with [illegible] day and engrossed in the great questions which were agitating Hindu society, he was not forgetful of family ties and duties. A touching story is told of his devotion to his younger brother, Kali Charan Lahiri, at this time. The latter was reading for his exmination for the medical degree, when, a few months before the date of it, his eyesight failed and he was ordered for the time being to give up reading altogether. It was a terrible blow to all his hopes, and but for his brother's help there is no doubt that he would have had to give up the career that he had planned. Ramtanu, however, was determined that if it was humanly possible, his brother should enter as arranged for the examination, and devoting every moment of his spare time to him, he read aloud the prescribed text-books over and over again until Kali Charan practically knew them by heart. When the time came he passed the examination with flying colours, a result due solely, as he always gratefully acknowledged, to Ramtanu's help.

The year 1835 is a memorable one in the history of education in Bengal. The Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, had long been at variance with the Committee of Public Instruction, which had been

appointed in 1823, and which was still strongly in favour of an exclusively oriental curriculum. Lord Macaulay, who came to India as Legal Member of Council, soon proved himself a strong ally of the Governor-General and he decided that there was no condition laid down with the grant made in 1813, for the renewal and improvement of literature, that made it inapplicable for the promotion of a modern English education. Accordingly in 1835 Lord William Bentinck ordered that the lac of rupees granted in 1813 should be expended in imparting instruction in European languages and sciences through the medium of English. This decisive action on the part of the Governor-General, though opposed by the old school, was eagerly welcomed by the younger generation among whom Ramtanu held an honoured place. He and a number of others used to meet regularly in the house of a friend, Ram Gopal Ghose, and, among other schemes this enthusiastic little group of reformers devised for the diffusion of knowledge beyond their own immediate circle, was the production of two journals, the *Gyanuneshun*, the Search after Knowledge, and the *Bengal Spectator* which contained columns both in English and Bengali. Further they started a club known as 'The Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge,' where discussions on every subject were freely encouraged. Topics were by no means wanting, for these years were among the most memorable in

modern Bengal. The Calcutta Medical College had been founded in June, 1835, and though the want of it had long been felt, there having previously been no adequate school for the training of Indian students in modern medical science, it met with opposition from a certain section of the community as likely to destroy the caste of students, who would be initiated into all the secrets of the dissecting room. In the same year also an Act conferring full liberty on the Press was passed. This was a great joy to the group of young Bengal students, who, accustomed to express themselves freely in their own private meetings, were now enabled to write and disseminate their opinions with the same freedom in the Press. About the same time the Calcutta Public Library was founded and placed in the Metcalfe Hall on its completion in 1842. It proved a great boon to the rising generation. These events, which are but a few of the most prominent of these years, show how rapid was the progress that was being made, and how many must have been the subjects of absorbing interest available for dicussion by Ramtanu and his friends. David Hare, who had proved so good a friend not only to Ramtanu but to the many other youths who had passed through his famous schools, died in 1842, and about the same time Ramtanu lost his elder brother Kesava to whom he owed so much. His mother, to whom he had been devotedly attached, died shortly afterwards.

In 1846 began a fresh chapter in Ramtanu's life. In that year the Krishnagar College was opened, being one of the first large colleges outside Calcutta and one of the first-fruits of the revival of education which had taken such firm root in the Capital. It was under the patronage of the Maharaja Siris Chandra of Krishnagar who entered his son's name as one of the first pupils and himself accepted the position of a member of the managing committee. Captain D. L. Richardson was appointed first Principal, Ramtanu being given the post of second master under him in the Collegiate School. Here Ramtanu found himself in congenial surroundings after his own heart. The same struggle that was going on between the old forces and the new in Calcutta was soon in actual progress in Krishnagar. The Maharaja favoured the party of progress and even went so far as to open a branch of the Brahmo Samaj in his own palace. A very large number of the students and teachers of the newly established college joined him, but Ramtanu from the first had not been wholly favourable towards its teachings. He had been entirely opposed to its first attacks on Christianity and had not sympathised with its attempts to attach to the Vedas the character of a divine revelation. Ramtanu's breadth of view and broadmindedness were remarkable in an age when bigotry was rife. 'Our desire should be to see truth triumph,' he wrote at this time. 'Let the votaries of all religions

appeal to the reason of their fellow creatures and let him who has truth on his side prevail.' But although he did not join the Brahmo Samaj he was closely associated with many of its members, meeting them in daily intercourse, freely exchanging ideas with them and discussing with them every aspect of religious belief. His influence in Krishnagar was unbounded. Coming straight from the midst of the most advanced coterie in Calcutta he was welcomed by the little group of men who were struggling towards enlightenment in Krishnagar. He infused into them new life and new ideas. The influence that such men as David Hare, Derozio, and Ram Mohan Roy had exercised upon him, he imparted to others—his love of truth, his respect for freedom of thought and speech, and his intense desire for knowledge, which alone could lead men to the Truth. Always he advocated free and unrestrained discussion, believing that it was only by going to the root of a question and judging for oneself on a full presentment of the facts that true knowledge could be acquired. He himself was always eager to gain fresh knowledge, even from the youngest and humblest, and it was this enthusiasm combined with innate modesty and simplicity of heart that helped to win him the popularity which he possessed in such full measure.

One of the most controversial topics of the day was the question of the remarriage of Hindu widows. The earliest discussion with regard to it had appeared

in the pages of the *Bengal Spectator*, edited by the pupils of Derozio. At Krishnagar, the Maharaja Siris Chandra interested himself in the matter and discussed it with the pundits of Nadia while the ardent young reformers in the college held a meeting to express their sympathy with it and their dissatisfaction with other customs of Hindu Society. But the band of reformers was a small one and the upholders of the old regime were not inactive. They began by spreading a rumour that the college students had committed the offence which is unpardonable in the eyes of every orthodox Hindu. They accused them of having killed a cow and eaten its flesh. The rumour quickly gained credence among those who were only too anxious to believe evil of the new party and many families withdrew their sons from the college, while even the Maharaja himself hung back, reluctant to break completely with the pundits and the influential supporters of the old regime. So great was the influence brought to bear against him, and so well did the opposite party recognise the leading part played by Ramtanu, that the latter was forced to recognise that it would be not only for his own benefit but for the good of the cause which he had at heart that he should for a time at least leave Krishnagar. Accordingly in April 1851 he obtained a transfer to Burdwan, being appointed Head Master of the school there on a salary of one hundred and fifty rupees a month.

The social atmosphere of Burdwan was very different from that of Krishnagar. The latter was following closely in the steps of Calcutta, keeping itself abreast of the latest movements. In Burdwan there was not the same class of students eager for enquiry and discussion. It was during this period, when Ramtanu doubtless had more time for reflection, that he finally broke with the old Hinduism. In spite of his advanced views and the persecution he had suffered at the hands of his coreligionists he still wore the Brahminical thread. A story is told of an incident that helped to induce him finally to break the last slight link that bound him to a creed to which he no longer adhered in spirit. He was performing the shradh ceremony of his mother at Krishnagar in the manner of an orthodox Brahmin, when a youth pointing at him the finger of scorn, laughed at him, saying, 'You do not believe in Hinduism. Yet what is this? Here you are performing your mother's shradh with your *paita* fully displayed. Truly a real Brahmin! If not, you are a hypocrite.' The taunt cut Ramtanu to the heart, the more so as on reflection he could only admit its justification. In October, 1851 he finally broke the last link that bound him to the old belief by removing the sacred thread.

It was only for a year that Ramtanu remained at Burdwan. In 1852 he went to Uttarpara as Headmaster of the English school there, a position he

continued to occupy for four years. Here immediately after his public renunciation of Hinduism he was subjected to much persecution from orthodox Hindus. No servant would stay with him, and he and his wife were often compelled to do all the menial work of the house themselves. Some of his friends, seeing his distress, urged him to yield on small points, such as re-adopting the *paita*, which would have made him outwardly conform and would have enabled him to be received again among the orthodox. There can be no doubt that the smallest sign of yielding would have been welcomed by the opposite party which fully realised Ramtanu's influence and how great a danger he was to the faith to which they still clung. But Ramtanu steadfastly refused to yield. He would not purchase ease and immunity from persecution by means of a lie, by conforming outwardly while inwardly he did not believe. He was content to abide by what he had done, consoled by the knowledge that he had done only what he thought to be right.

In 1854 came the inauguration of the new educational policy of Government. The Court of Directors sent out a despatch, said to have been drawn up by John Stuart Mill, which directed that the Governor-General should establish an Educational Department as a separate Department of the Government of India, that a University should be established in each of the Presidency cities, and that new schools

should be founded and those already existing supported, while Government aid should be given to those founded by private enterprise. It was a great step in advance, for without this generous assistance on the part of Government it would have been impossible for education to spread as rapidly as it has since done. The new Education Department was at once established with a Director of Public Instruction at its head and a large number of Inspectors under him. Schools for the training of teachers were established and with a rapidity that was astonishing. High English, Middle English and vernacular schools sprang up all over the country in the years that followed.

The work that Ramtanu did during his four years' tenure of office at Uttarpara long survived him. Many a young mind there came under his influence, receiving an impress that it was never afterwards to lose. Those who had benefited by his teaching and example, gratefully acknowledging their debt, erected after his death more than forty years later, this tablet to his memory in the school where he had taught—

THIS TABLET TO THE MEMORY OF

BABU RAMTANU LAHIRI

IS PUT UP BY HIS SURVIVING UTTARPARA PUPILS AS A TOKEN OF THE LOVE, GRATITUDE AND VENERATION THAT HE INSPIRED IN THEM WHILE HEADMASTER OF THE UTTARPARA SCHOOL FROM 1852 TO 1856 BY HIS LOVING CARE, BY HIS SOUND METHOD OF INSTRUCTION, WHICH AIMED LESS AT THE MERE IMPARTING OF KNOWLEDGE THAN AT THAT SUPREME END OF ALL EDUCATION, THE HEALTHY STIMULATION OF THE INTELLECT, THE EMOTION, AND THE WILL OF THE PUPIL, AND ABOVE ALL BY THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOBLE LIFE HE LED.

BORN DECEMBER 1813 : DIED AUGUST 1898.

It would be difficult for pupils to inscribe to any teacher a nobler tribute than this.

During the few years that succeeded his leaving the Uttarpara school, Ramtanu held several different appointments. Transferred to the Baraset school in 1857, he remained there about eighteen months, exercising the same personal influence over his pupils as elsewhere, and from its vicinity to Calcutta being able to keep in close touch with his friends there. In 1858 he was transferred again to Krishnagar, but after only a few months there he was appointed to the English school at Rassapagla near Calcutta, established by Government especially for the education of Tippoo Sultan's descendants. Though

reluctant to leave Krishnagar where he had only so recently returned, he welcomed the opportunity of again enjoying the society of his friends in Calcutta.

Once more Ramtanu was in close touch with the great movements that were rapidly changing the condition of life and society in Bengal. These were eventful years. The mutiny of 1857, after a brief period of anxiety, had passed, leaving the British Government stronger and more firmly rooted than before, while the transfer of the Company to the Crown had paved the way for the proclamation of the Indian Empire which was to come twenty years later. The indigo disturbances were rousing the keenest interest, the *Hindu Patriot*, that fore-runner of the power of the Press in Bengal, entering with zest into the controversy. Young Bengal was producing some of her first literary men. Ishvar Chandra Gupta, the poet, followed by Michael Madhu Sudhan Dutt, Haris Chandra Mukherjee, editor of the *Hindu Patriot*, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the novelist, Dinabandhu Mitter, the dramatist, were proving themselves redoubtable champions of the new learning, while Keshub Chandra Sen was already beginning to make his mark as a reformer and as the refounder of the Brahmo Samaj.

Ramtanu's stay at Rassapagla, however, was short and he was transferred to Barisal as Head Master of the Zilla school there. This appointment he held

for only three months, being transferred for the third time to Krishnagar in April, 1861. For the succeeding five and a half years he worked on there, exercising all his old personal fascination upon those who came in contact with him, and then failing health compelled him to retire. Mr. Alfred Smith, then Principal of the Krishnagar College, in sending up his application for pension to the Director of Public Instruction wrote :—

"In parting with Babu Ramtanu Lahiri, I may be allowed to say that Government will lose the services of an educational officer than whom no one has discharged his public duties with greater fidelity, zeal and devotion, or has laboured more assiduously and successfully for the moral elevation of his pupils."

Glowing as this tribute was, it was one that was well deserved and heartily endorsed by every member of the college, masters and students alike. He left Krishnagar amid universal regret.

His health being seriously affected, Ramtanu went to live for a time after his retirement at Bhagalpur, hoping that the drier climate would prove beneficial. This not being the case, however, he returned to his old home at Krishnagar, and there and in Calcutta spent most of his remaining years. Although never again enjoying robust health, he lived for nearly thirty years after his retirement. They were busy years, spent in the management of his

family affairs and in close intercourse with all that was best and noblest in the society of the day. In and around his own home at Krishnagar he was universally respected and beloved. Not only those who came into close and immediate contact with him but the poor and unlettered peasant who dwelt without his gates learned to appreciate his worth. A story is told of the wonderful influence he exercised even over those who must have known him chiefly, if not entirely, only by repute. A friend of his was walking in the neighbourhood of his village and curious to find out if the reports of the widespread respect in which he was held locally were true, asked some labourers whom he met on the road if they knew Ramtanu Babu. They at once showed surprise, not unmixed with indignation, that they should be asked such a question. "Who does not know him?" they asked. When questioned further as to what kind of a man he was, one of them replied, "Do you call him a man? He is a god." "But how can you call him a god," the stranger asked, "who has cast off the Brahminical thread and eats fowls?" For a moment the men stared at their interrogator. Then one of them answered, "It is evident that you do not belong to this part of the country or you would not have spoken in this way. Casting off the thread and eating fowls may be faults in others, but not in him. Whatever he does is good."

For a time during his retirement, Ramtanu acted as guardian of the minors of the Mukherjee family of Khetra Gobardanga, a responsible post for which he was recommended by Government. There, as elsewhere, his wonderful personality won its way. "Ramtanu's influence was felt by almost every villager" wrote one who knew him well. "He was a friend of both the orthodox Hindus and the members of the Brahmo Samaj. The long standing breach between them in the village was healed by him, who was a friend of both." Although Ramtanu had broken with Hinduism and had not joined the Brahmo Samaj, he was quick to acknowledge what was good in both. To him it mattered little what a man's outward creed might be. Goodness was the same whether it was the goodness of a Hindu, a Muhammadan, a Christian or a Brahmo. Everything that was good and noble he set before himself as the end and aim of life. Every social movement, every reform calculated to improve the position of his fellow countrymen, met with his ready sympathy. Often he approved a proposed reform, yet realised that the times were not yet ripe for bringing it about. Such an instance was female emancipation, which was then one of the many topics of the day. While he was a zealous advocate of it on principle, none recognised quicker than he what care was necessary in putting it into practice, and how jealously their women folk must be guarded from contact with society that might be hurtful to them.

In his later years Ramtanu suffered heavy domestic losses. First his son-in-law, a promising youth, then his daughter Indumati and finally his eldest son Nova Kumar were taken from him. For a man of his affectionate disposition in whom the home ties were so deeply rooted these losses were a heavy trial. Yet he bore them with splendid courage and resignation. Once when he had shown undue emotion at the loss of his daughter, he reproached himself and turning to his friends said, "We say that God is good, but our conduct hardly tallies with what we say. I have now shown unbelief in shedding tears for Indu. Why should I weep for her when I remember that she is in His good keeping ?"

Soon after the loss of his son and daughter, Ramtanu came to live in Calcutta in 1879, continuing to reside there with occasional visits to his home at Krishnagar for the remainder of his life. His circumstances were by no means prosperous and beyond his small pension of seventy five rupees a month he had little upon which to rely. The long illness of his children had been a heavy drain upon his resources and his open handed charity had taken little thought for the future. It was at this stage that his second son Sharat Kumar, now of an age to fend for himself, came with filial devotion to his assistance. Giving up his studies at the University he obtained the employment of Librarian at the Metropolitan Institution, a post he continued to hold

for five years. Ambitious, however, of contributing still further to his father's support than the small income so derived would allow, he set up on his own account in 1883 as a bookseller and publisher. The influence of his father's name and the support of his father's large circle of friends enabled him to meet with success from the outset. He thus had the great joy of placing his father beyond the need of financial worries and of very largely contributing to his happiness and comfort during the remaining years of his life.

Ramtanu's last years were still further saddened by the death of his youngest son at the age of fifteen, of his wife, the faithful and devoted partner of all his joys and sorrows, and of his younger brother Dr. Kali Charan Lahiri, as well as of many of his most devoted friends. Yet keenly as he felt these bereavements, they failed to kill the hopefulness and buoyancy of his nature. To the end he maintained his unwavering faith in the divine wisdom, accepting with resignation the trials that were sent to him. He died on the 18th of August 1898 full of years and honour.

Although it was not given to Ramtanu Lahiri to achieve fame, as the world counts it, in any particular walk of life, his influence on his day and generation was undoubted. Fame would have been the last thing that he himself would have desired. Ambitious only of all that was good and honourable

and true, no man could have demanded less of life than he. For himself he asked nothing, for his fellow-men he asked everything. Upon all with whom he came in contact and they were all the leading men of his day, his intense earnestness, his love of truth, his uncompromising aversion to all that was unworthy or unjust, and his never failing eagerness to help others, left a deep impression. His humility was touching and profound. "When he saw others who spent much time in prayer," wrote Professor Max Müller of him, "he considered them the most favoured of mortals, for pure and conscientious as he was, he felt himself so sinful that he could but seldom utter a word or two in the spirit of what he considered true prayer." It was this spirit of true modesty which prevented him from ever thrusting himself to the front and taking a leading part in the great controversies that were shaking society to its foundations. Yet quietly and persistently he did the work that it was given to him to do, exercising a very real influence on his day and generation, his sweetness and gentleness of disposition helping to heal the wounds of controversy and pleading for a wider sympathy and a broader toleration in matters of belief.

Nawab Amir Ali Khan Bahadur

NAWAB AMIR ALL KHAN BAHADUR, C.I.E.

1810—1879.

"Next after Sir Salar Jung he was the best Muhammadan I have ever known." Such was the high praise bestowed upon Nawab Amir Ali Khan Bahadur by no less distinguished an administrator than Sir Richard Temple, praise which few of those who had the privilege of being acquainted with the subject of it will consider to have been exaggerated. Throughout the course of a long life he was universally respected and esteemed, wielding great influence not only among his co-religionists but among Europeans and Hindus alike, as one of the leading Muhammadans of the day in Bengal.

Amir Ali Khan came of an old Persian family which had long been settled in India. He was ninth in descent from Kazi Syed Noah who after filling the office of Kazi at Baghdad left his native land to seek his fortunes in India. Settling at Delhi he met with much respect at the Imperial Court, his great learning winning for him an honoured place, with numerous grants of land and titles of distinction. It was his grandson, Mulla Shah Noor Muhammad who was the first to leave Delhi and

wander further east. He finally settled in Behar, his great grandson again, Muhammad Rafi being the first to make his home at Barh in the Patna district. He married the daughter of Kazi Syed Muhammad Mea and greatly distinguished himself in the service of the Naib Nazim of Bengal. He was much in favour with Ali Verdi Khan and it was through his recommendation that he received the title of Shaikul Mashaikh from the Imperial Court at Delhi. His son Waris Ali took little part in politics, being content to remain at home and manage his zemindari. For his own son, however, he expected greater things and he gave him the best education possible, sending him as far afield as Moradabad and Bareilly where he was present at several actions during Lord Lake's campaign against the Mahrattas. He returned to Barh on his father's death and there his son, the future Nawab Bahadur, was born on the 1st of March, 1810.

Amir Ali Khan early showed signs of the qualities which were to win him so prominent a place in later life. Until the age of nineteen he prosecuted his studies at home, becoming proficient in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. It is typical, however, of Muhammadan conservatism and of the prejudices of the time that he was not taught English, and it is an astonishing fact that, in spite of his own broad and liberal views and of the place he eventually won for himself in the regard of all the European officials with

whom he came in contact, he was never till the day of his death able to converse in the English language. His first appointment was that of pleader in the Civil Court at Patna in 1832. Two years later he went down to Calcutta where he was appointed one of the assistants to the Envoy despatched to the Court of Naziruddin Haider, King of Oude. Here amid the intrigues and petty jealousies of an Indian court he first showed that tact and discretion which was later to enable him to occupy so responsible and difficult position with dignity and credit. He remained at the Court of Oude until the King's death in 1838, being then appointed a Deputy Assistant Superintendent in the Presidency Special Commissioner's Court at Calcutta, where it was his duty to plead on behalf of government in all cases of claims to resumption of lands held rent free on defection of want of title. In 1854 he became government pleader in the same court, leaving it a few years later to practise in the old Sudder Dewani Adalat. So far his career, though of no special distinction had been marked by conspicuous ability, high legal attainments and genial and tactful manners. These first appointments however, were but the preliminary training for the important work that still awaited him.

Loyalty had always been the watch-word of the Barh family and it ever remained one of the most conspicuous traits in the character of Amir Ali

Khan. In the dark year of 1857, when many another held back, he came boldly forward to put his loyal protestations into spirited and courageous action. Throwing the whole weight of the great influence that he possessed, not only among his co-religionists but among all creeds and classes, on the side of law and order, he was untiring in doing his utmost to allay the unfortunate suspicions that had been aroused and to bring about an understanding between all parties. Patna, where the largest body of Indian troops outside Calcutta was stationed, was regarded as the centre of disaffection, and when Mr. Samuells was appointed Commissioner to deal with the Mutiny, Amir Ali who was intimately acquainted with local conditions was chosen to be his special assistant and a Deputy Magistrate in all the districts of the Patna Division. His appointment like that of Mr. Samuells came in for a considerable amount of criticism, but it was ably defended by the acting Commissioner, Mr. Farquharson, in October, 1857.

"I may perhaps be allowed to state" he wrote, "that Amir Ali's appointment was, in the opinion of those best able to judge and appreciate the tone of Patna native society, a healthy, politic, popular and useful measure. The better classes of natives in the city have throughout these evil times displayed nothing but loyalty and good will to the British Government. The appointment of Amir Ali, a native of the province and known to each and all,

either as personal legal adviser or sucessful pleader in the highest court of judicature, to assist the Commissioner in his early communications with those classes, was precisely what was required to allay fears which were daily gaining ground and strength—fears that the Government was bent on general and indiscriminate vengeance for the attrocities committed in other parts of India. There is no calculating what might have been the danger or mischief of a spread of the belief among a credulous and timid population. The fear was at once allayed by Amir Ali's advent and not only has the real justice of the Government been made apparent to the native mind but its vast power and resources, not half understood or believed by the people were made real and credible to all." The appointment was further approved by the Court of Directors in a Despatch of August, 1858, wherein the opinion was expressed that "the Lieutenant Governor had shown good and sufficient reason for it and the excellent service rendered by Munshi Amir Ali is the best justification of the government in selecting him for the important office which he held in Patna."

In recognition of the services he had rendered, Amir Ali was created a Khan Bahadur in 1864 and in the following year he was appointed a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. He was also an Honorary Magistrate at Alipore and a Justice of

the Peace of Calcutta, while the many societies to which he belonged kept him fully occupied. Among his many activities that which was destined to assume perhaps the greatest importance of all was the inauguration of the National Muhammadan Association of Calcutta for which he was responsible. His object in founding it was to unite all classes of Muhammadans so that they might work together for the common good. He recognised that cohesion meant strength and that one of the main reasons for the backwardness into which the Muhammadan community had fallen was its lack of organisation and of any representative body to take action in its behalf. As President of the Association that he had founded, Amir Ali did invaluable work on behalf of his co-religionists. He spared no effort to improve their condition and to bring home to them a sense of their responsibilities and of the necessity of bestirring themselves to keep abreast of modern conditions. Like Nawab Abdul Latif and a select little company of Muhammadan leaders, he was quick to see that the old conservative feeling of exclusiveness in social relations and education could only be persisted in at the expense of the general prosperity and well being of the Muhammadan community. He was never tired of expounding the advantages of British rule in India, and with the object of bringing them home to the people he wrote in Persian a work known as the Amir Nawab on the history of the

British administration in India, which met with considerable success.

Government was not slow in recognising the good work done by Amir Ali, and when an opportunity occurred showed itself anxious to make use of his services. In 1867 it became necessary to appoint a manager for the affairs of Wajid Ali Shah, the ex-king of Oude, who was then residing in Calcutta. It was a most difficult post, one that few would envy and few were adequately fitted to occupy. The choice of government fell finally upon Amir Ali Khan. He had proved his capability and above all his unfailing tact as assistant to the Commissioner of Patna in the difficult days of 1857, while his genial manners and sympathetic disposition had already won him a host of friends in Calcutta. As manager of the affairs of the ex-king of Oude, however, he had the most difficult task of his lifetime. Wajid Ali Shah, surrounded by a crowd of favourites and satellites who bitterly resented the intervention of a stranger, was himself by no means inclined to welcome with open arms the official appointed by the British government to regulate his private affairs. Resenting the position in which he had been placed, the ex-king endeavoured to withdraw himself altogether from social intercourse, particularly with Europeans, adopting towards the government a tone of marked hostility and distrust. By his constant tact and unwearied patience Amir

Ali succeeded in improving the relations between him and the British Government as well as in bringing a certain amount of order and honesty into the management of the ex-king's affairs. For eight years he remained in charge and it says much for his successful administration that at the end of that period he retired with the good will and regret of both the Government and the ex-king. So ably had he fulfilled his difficult task that Government afterwards entrusted him with another of a somewhat similar nature, to settle the debts of the last Naib Nazim of Bengal.

In the last few years of his life fresh honours came to him. In 1875 he was given the title of Nawab as a personal distinction, it being conferred upon him by Lord Northbrook at a Durbar held on the 17th of September that year. Two years later he was invited to attend the Imperial Assembly at Delhi, receiving there a silver medal from the Viceroy, Lord Lytton. Shortly before his death he received yet another distinction from the British government, being created a Companion of the newly created order of the Indian Empire. About the same time the Sultan of Turkey bestowed upon him the Companionship of the Turkish Order of the Osmanieh in recognition of his services to the Muhammadan community.

Nawab Amir Ali died on the 16th of November, 1879 and the following letters, one from the Private

Secretary to His Excellency the Viceroy and the other from the Lieutenant Governor himself sufficiently testify to the esteem in which he was held.

VICEROY'S CAMP, DELHI
24th Novr. 1879

DEAR SIR,

H. E. the Viceroy has received with deep regret the news contained in the letter of the 20th of the death of your father the late Nawab Amir Ali. H. E. desires me to express to you his deep sympathy in the loss which not only you but the Muhammadan community of Calcutta and His Excellency himself have suffered by the death of so highly and deservedly esteemed a gentleman and so loyal a servant of the British government.

I remain, Dear Sir,
Yours faithfully
G. T. COLLEY, COL.
P. S. to the Viceroy.

SIMLA
28th Nov. 1879.

MY DEAR SIR,

I received with very deep regret your letter announcing the death of my good old friend Nawab Amir Ali. I heard from him not long ago and was not at all aware of his illness or I should have written to enquire after him. He will be a great loss to Muhammadan society and Government loses in him an old and valuable servant. Personally I shall miss very much his loyal and hearty co-operation in all matters affecting the welfare of the Muhammadan population.

I am,
Yours faithfully
A. EDEN.

At a time when Muhammadans of distinction were unfortunately only too few, the figure of Nawab Amir Ali Khan stood out as a shining example to his co-religionists. He was one of that little band of men to whom it was given by strenuous effort and unwearying vigilance to raise the Muhammadan community from the slough of despond into which it had fallen. All who came in contact with him felt the charm of his personality. A learned Persian scholar and fluent Urdu speaker, he was equally at home among all classes, officials and non-officials, Europeans and Indians alike. The services he rendered to government in the dark days of mutiny, as manager of the ex-king of Oude's affairs, and as a loyal and reliable adviser were gratefully acknowledged, while the immense services he was able to render to the Muhammadan community were inestimable. To quote again the words of Sir Richard Temple he was 'one of the old school, and afforded a complete example of its virtues and merits.'

Maharajadhiraj Mahtab Chand Rai Bahadur of Burdwan

MAHARAJADHIRAJ MAHTAB CHAND RAI BAHADUR OF BURDWAN.

1820—1879

Mahtab Chand Rai, Maharajadhiraj of Burdwan, was one of the great figures of the nineteenth century. Inheriting a high position among the nobles of Bengal, he won further distinctions by his own loyalty, energy and ability. Not only did he succeed in obtaining confirmation of all the distinctions conferred upon his predecessors by the Moghul government, but by the judicious management of his vast estates he enormously increased their value, handing on a yet more splendid inheritance to his successor even than that which he had himself received. Of a retiring disposition, and quiet and dignified in manner, he never thrust himself into the political arena. He was content to exercise wisely and with restraint the great influence that his position gave him, never forgetful of the heavy responsibilities that that position entailed.

Born on the 17th of November 1820, Mahtab Chand was the fourth son of Lala Paran Chand Kapur. The latter's sister Kamal Kumari had married the Maharaja Tej Chand Rai of Burdwan and on the death of their only son, the Maharaja

adopted his nephew Mahtab Chand as his heir. The Kapur family was one of considerable antiquity and great distinction. The founder of the Burdwan branch was Abu Rai of Kotli in Lahore, by caste a Kapur Kshatriya, who settled in Bengal in the middle of the 17th century, being appointed 'Choudhuri and Kotowal of Rekabi Bazaar' under the Fauzdar of Chakla Burdwan. To the estate that he founded his descendants gradually added further possessions, generation after generation playing its part in building up the immense property which Mahtab Rai was finally to complete and consolidate in the nineteenth century. Chitra Sen Rai, eighth in descent from Abu Rai was the first to obtain the title of Raja, a distinction he received from the Emperor Mahomed Shah in 1740. His successor Tilak Chand attained the higher rank of Maharajadhiraj Bahadur, a title which each successive head of the Burdwan family has since held. This son, Tez Chand succeeded at the age of six in 1771 and obtained from the Emperor Shah Alum a sanad dated the same year confirming him in the rank of Maharajadhiraj Bahadur and appointing him commander of 5,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry with various other military distinctions. For sixty-one years he lived to enjoy these honours, his long life extending from the momentous period of the dawn of British rule in Bengal down to the comparatively peaceful days of its firm establishment in the fourth

decade of the nineteenth century. Among the many changes that he saw pass over the face of Bengal by no means the least important to him as a great landholder was the Permanent Settlement, which became law as Regulation I of 1793.

Mahtab Chand succeeded his adopted father on the 16th of August 1823 and a year later, when only thirteen years of age, he received a *farman* from the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, confirming him in the title of Maharajadhiraj Bahadur. Brought thus into prominence at a very early age, the possessor of a vast estate and great wealth, and the holder of one of the highest titles in Bengal, Mahtab Rai fully realised alike the possibilities and the responsibilities of his high position. Although a young man exposed to all the temptations to which his great wealth and independence rendered him particularly liable, he set himself from the first to administer it wisely and well. Naturally of a quiet and retiring disposition, he made no bid for popularity or political eminence. Content with his position as one of the greatest landholders in Bengal and as the representative of one of its most important families, he concentrated all his energies on improving the condition of his tenants and estate, erecting his splendid palaces and laying out his gardens at Burdwan, and worthily maintaining the honourable traditions of his house.

Loyalty, whole-hearted and unswerving, was one

of the strongest traits in the character of Mahtab Chand. Recognising on every side the benefits that British rule had conferred on his distracted country, he gave to it his firm allegiance. His own estates from their geographical position had been especially liable to plunder and devastation during the unsettled years of the eighteenth century, and the remarkable prosperity they had attained in his own day under the peaceful reign of British law and order formed a striking contrast. Twice the Maharaja had the satisfaction of materially assisting Government in maintaining that same law and order. The Santal Rebellion of 1855 afforded him an opportunity of showing his loyalty in a practical way which he showed himself eager to adopt. His estates lay between Calcutta and the scene of the disturbances and the railway running in those days no further than Ranigunj, the Maharaja was able to give Government valuable assistance in the matter of transport and in improving the means of communication. All the vast resources of his great estates were freely placed at the disposal of the authorities. His workmen rapidly opened up new roads, and his elephants and bullock carts speedily transported troops and baggage through the wild country in which the turbulent Santals had hitherto held their own unchallenged. Services of a similar nature the Maharaja rendered again a few years later during the Sepoy Mutiny, again undertaking

transport duties on an extensive scale and setting an example of loyalty to the other Zemindars of Bengal. The first recognition on the part of government for these and other services came in 1864 in his appointment as an additional member of the Legislative Council of the Governor-General. He was one of the first Indians to attain to the dignity of a seat in the Council, and his practical experience as a great landowner and his intimate knowledge of the conditions of life generally in Bengal proved of great service. He made no attempt at oratorical display but his speeches were invariably characterised by simplicity and strong common sense, and they were listened to with attention and respect as the words of a man whose impartiality and honesty were unimpeachable and whose opportunities of acquiring information were unrivalled. In 1868 the further distinction was conferred upon him of a grant of armorial bearings with supporters, and nine years later at the Imperial assemblage at Delhi, he was granted as a personal distinction the right to a salute of thirteen guns.

Apart from his position on the Legislative Council, Maharaja Mahtab Chand refrained on principle from taking any active part in the great political movements of the day. On almost every question he held decided views but he considered that it was more incumbent upon him to exercise his influence quietly through legitimate channels as the adviser

of Government rather than openly to take part in political controversies. His opinion was constantly asked by the authorities and carried all the weight of his great name and position. Popularity he altogether disregarded. Having the full courage of his convictions, he cared nothing for the approval or disapproval of others, once he was convinced of the justice of the course he had advocated.

In all matters that related to the spread of education the Maharaja was keenly interested. At Burdwan he established an Anglo-Vernacular School which he threw open to boys of all creeds and classes. This Institution which has since been raised to the status of a college provides a free education in English, Bengali, Sanskrit and Persian for poor and deserving students, and a separate department for girls has since been added. Himself of a studious disposition and well educated, he did much to encourage literature and scholarships. He was particularly desirous that the Mahabharat, the Ramayana, and the other religious books of his faith should be more widely disseminated and made accessible to all, not only in cheap Sanskrit editions but in Bengali translations, which alone could popularise them in modern Bengal. With this object he engaged the services of some of the most famous Pandits of the day. For over thirty years their labours continued, resulting in the republication of the original Sanskrit books with Bengali translations, which have done so much

to make them better known among the people of Bengal.

In the cause of medical and charitable relief the Maharaja was no less generous. He established charitable dispensaries at Burdwan and Kalna and gave temporary aid freely in all cases of need throughout his estates. To his tenants and numerous dependents he was especially open-handed and in all cases of epidemics and famine he was ever ready to help to the utmost of his power. In the severe famines in Orissa and Behar he rendered Government invaluable aid, placing all the resources of his great wealth at its disposal. To the Madras Famine Fund he made the magnificent donation of Rs. 1,50,000. The religious endowments made by his ancestors at Kalna and elsewhere he maintained in their entirety.

Among his other varied interests, the Maharaja spent much time and money in establishing a Zoological garden at Burdwan, which is still maintained by the present head of the family. He was also one of the earliest and most liberal supporters of the Zoological gardens at Calcutta, which are to-day so great a feature of the Capital. Again in the development of Darjeeling as a hill station he played a leading part. He was quick to see the great future that lay before it, once popular attention had been drawn to it and once the idea of a summer head quarters for the Bengal Government among

the hills had been definitely adopted. He purchased large tracts of land in the vicinity of Darjeeling and Kurseong and greatly assisted in the development of those stations. The establishment of Government for a certain period of the year in Darjeeling soon led to a great influx of visitors official and non-official and the Maharaja's wise foresight in purchasing land before the rush began proved a splendid investment. On the beautification of his own house in Burdwan he lavished much care and thought, practically all the chief buildings there owing their origin to him. The beautiful Dilkhusha gardens were designed and laid out under his personal supervision, and like the palace itself remain to-day as evidence of his excellent taste. In the management of his affairs he was assisted by a Council of responsible advisers appointed by him on the lines of the Viceroy's executive councils, each member being placed in charge of a special department of the estate. The Maharaja proved himself an excellent judge of character and the members of the Council were selected with great care, some of the ablest men in Bengal, who afterwards still further distinguished themselves, doing good service upon it. He himself took a personal interest in the smallest details of the management of his property and throughout his long career he administered it wisely and well.

Maharaja Mahtab Chand died on the 26th

October 1879 at Bhagalpur. For forty-seven years he had been one of the most prominent figures in Bengal and though he had never courted publicity and had been fearless in the expression on several occasions of anti-popular opinions, when his advice had been asked, he had won universal respect among all classes. Straightforward and honest, with a detestation of hypocrisy and falsehood, he was trusted and consulted by rich and poor, by officials and non-officials alike. Quiet and retiring, yet with a true sense of his own dignity and of the responsibilities of his position, he worthily upheld the great traditions of his house and has left behind him a name that takes high place in the roll call of the nobles of Bengal in the nineteenth century.

Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahadur

NAWAB ABDUL LATIF KHAN BAHADUR, C. I. E.

1828—1893

The name of Nawab Abdul Latif Khan will always have an honoured place in Muhammadan annals in the nineteenth century. Although for over thirty-five years he occupied no higher permanent official post than that of Deputy Magistrate, his great ability and keen advocacy of the causes he had at heart won for him an unique position, not only among the Indian community but also in European society. He was one of the first to recognise how great was the mistake that his co-religionists were making in holding themselves aloof from the wide-spread educational movement of the day, and in the great task of awakening them to a sense of their responsibilities he played a leading part. A large tolerance and a very earnest desire that Hindus and Muhammadans might draw more closely together won him well-nigh universal sympathy and esteem. Occupied as he was with the heavy routine work of a government official he yet found time to throw himself heart and soul into every movement that promised the advancement of the Muhammadan community or the amelioration of the lot of his poorer

and more unfortunate fellow-countrymen. Besides his work as Deputy Magistrate in the Bengal Provincial Service, he was also at various times a fellow of the Calcutta University, a member of the Bengal Legislative Council, an Honorary Magistrate, a founder of the Presidency College, a Justice of the Peace, a member of the Special Committee appointed to conduct the first regular census in Calcutta and the Founder of the Calcutta Literary Society. Yet this list, long as it is, gives but a small conception of the energy and the wide-spread sympathies of Nawab Abdul Latif.

His long life covered the greater part of the nineteenth century. Born in 1828, it was given to him to see the great advance socially, morally and economically which that century had brought to India and to Bengal in particular. In his youth, the railway and the telegraph, those two great forerunners of progress and civilisation, were unknown even in the west. He lived to see them completely change the conditions of life in one of the most conservative and slow-moving countries in the world. In 1828 the East India Company still held its Charter and India for six years more was still a land of restrictions. Lord William Bentinck had but recently assumed the reins of office and the most famous act of his administration, the abolition of *Sati*, was yet to come.

Abdul Latif came of a family of distinction which

had been settled for generations in Eastern Bengal. Tracing its descent from Khaled, one of the first great soldiers of the Crescent, known from his prowess in religious warfare as the 'Sword of God,' it numbered men of learning, piety and enterprise among its members. The descendants of the 'Sword of God' lived in Mecca itself until one of them, inspired by that spirit of adventure which led so many of his countrymen eastwards, set out for India. Making his way to Delhi, Shah Azimuddin settled there under the special protection of the Emperor, acquiring much fame on account of his learning and piety. His son Abdur Rasul travelled yet further afield, obtaining the appointment of a Judgeship in Eastern Bengal and finally making his home at Rajapur in the Faridpur district. Those were troublous days and law and order were yet things of the future on the outskirts of the empire. The great rivers were the main highways of Eastern Bengal and they were infested with dacoits who rendered unsafe for habitation the country far inland on either bank. Choosing a quiet and secure retreat, Abdur Rasul made for himselfa home which is still in the possession of his descendants to-day. He was succeeded in his judgeship by his son, who acquired more lands and added still further to the dignity of the family. But as often happened to Muhammadan families in past days, their increase inevitably meant their decay, the property of the original founder

being divided and subdivided among his descendants until the share of each became insufficient for his maintenance. This occurring among the descendants of Abdur Rasul at Rajapur, various cadets of the family were forced to look beyond the local limits of their own home for the means of livelihood. Among them Kaji Fakir Muhamed, sixth in descent from Shah Azimuddin, set out from his old home to seek his fortune in Calcutta. There he joined the bar of the old Suddar Dewani Adaulut, in those days almost the only career open to a man of ambition outside the service of the Company. The freedom and independence enjoyed by a Pleader at the Sudder Court appealed to Fakir Muhamed and his own personal interests travelled far beyond the limits of the legal profession. The study of history exercised for him an absorbing fascination and the result of his researches was a Universal History written by him in Persian and entitled Jami-ul-Tawarik. It was published in 1836 and met with considerable success. Eight years later Kaji Fakir Muhamed died at his old home at Rajapur, from which success in another and wider sphere of life had never weaned his affections.

His second son was the future Nawab, the subject of this memoir. With his two brothers he was educated at the Calcutta Madrassa and early showed signs of the distinction he was destined to gain in later years. The Madrassa owed its origin to that wisest of

Indian administrators, Warren Hastings, who had planned it for the training of men for the Company's service and for the administration of the law as it then stood. It had thus become the very centre of Persian and Arabic study in the midst of the new Bengal that was gradually rising into existence, becoming as time went on the great stronghold of conservatism and tradition as opposed to the spirit of progress and reform. But conditions were rapidly changing and with the strengthening of the British dominion in India came the necessity for widening and modernising the course of study and making the English language one of its principal features. It was thus while still at the Madrassa that Abdul Latif was first brought face to face with the problem which was to form the chief work of his life. The Muhammadan community, clinging to the old traditional forms of study, turned a deaf ear to the rising tide of modernism. Intensely conservative by nature, unaccustomed to competition and not understanding that the pre-eminence they had always held in legal and classical studies could ever be seriously threatened, they failed to realise what others were quick to grasp that conditions had changed irrevocably and that a knowledge of English had become a virtual necessity. It is extraordinary in the light of modern days to look back upon the rigid attitude adopted by the Muhammadan community in general and their long refusal to advance with the

times. It was while Abdul Latif was at the Madrassa in the early forties that the study of English after much controversy was first introduced there. But so great was the opposition that the English classes were practically boycotted, the students refusing to be drawn from their Persian and Arabic studies and from the study of the Law which was fast ceasing to be the law of the land. In vain it was pointed out to them that under the new regime a knowledge of English was essential, and that the importance of Persian and Arabic and the study of Muhammadan Law was not what it had been. With a persistence that seems remarkable seventy years later they steadily refused to take the opportunities that were offered to them by a Government anxious only for their welfare. It was thus that the Hindu community, untramelled by the same prejudices and quick to move with the times, seized the advantage which it has ever since held. It was only such Muhammadans as Abdul Latif and a little company of his fellow students who had a truer insight into the future. They threw themselves heartily into the study of English and the modern side; eager to equip themselves to meet the requirements of the day. Distressed at the position into which the Muhammadan community was rapidly falling, Abdul Latif set himself from this time onwards to combat the prejudices that prevented them from moving with the times and adapting themselves to altered conditions.

Abdul Latif's early proficiency in English, distinguishing him among his co-religionists, at once brought him into contact with many of the highest government officials of the day. The introduction of the study of English into the Madrassa course had been watched with great interest by Government, which had used every means in its power to bring the necessity of it plainly before the eyes of the Muhammadan community. The few students who were prompt to take advantage of the English classes were consequently marked out for encouragement and distinction, and Abdul Latif, who had won a Government scholarship, by his modesty, his charm of manner and his complete mastery of English soon won for himself an assured place in the best society of the day. In those days, however, there were far fewer posts open to Indian students than there are to-day, and some time elapsed before he gained a permanent appointment under Government. After leaving the Madrassa his first employment was as Private Secretary to the Amir of Sind who was residing on a political pension at Dum Dum. A year later he was officiating as a master at the Dacca Collegiate School. After another temporary billet with a Commission of Enquiry under Mr. Samuells, I.C.S., he was back again in Calcutta as an Anglo-Arabic Professor at the Calcutta Madrassa. His name, however, had now been sent up and approved for the Subordinate Executive Service

and he had not long to wait for an appointment. In 1849 at the age of twenty-one he was appointed a Deputy Magistrate by Sir Herbert Maddock, Deputy Governor of Bengal. Beginning in the then lowest grade of Deputy Magistrates on the pay of Rs. 200 a month, he was posted to the head-quarter station of the 24-Parganas. For over-twenty five years he remained in the subordinate executive service and it is one of the most striking features of Abdul Latif's career that though he held so comparatively humble an official position he exercised such wide-spread influence and was so universally acknowledged as one of the foremost leaders of Muhammadan society not only in Bengal but throughout India. It speaks much for the individuality and force of character of the man himself.

For three years Abdul Latif remained at Alipore, learning the work of a Deputy Magistrate, and at the end of that period he was invested with first class powers and was also made a Justice of the Peace. In 1853, he received promotion in the ordinary course of service and was chosen as the first subdivisional officer of the newly formed subdivision of Kalaroa, then a part of the 24-Parganas District. For a year he remained there, taking a keen interest in the unfortunate differences which had arisen between planters and ryots in the indigo districts and which eventually led to the appointment of the famous Indigo Commission by the Lieutenant Governor,

Sir John Peter Grant in 1860. Even in these first few years of service Abdul Latif gained a reputation for energy and ability and above all for that broadmindedness and tact which so distinguished him in later life. It was for this reason that after a year at Kalaroa he was chosen for a post where ability and tact were especially needful. The subdivision of Jehanabad had long been a thorn in the side of the Bengal Government. It is constantly referred to as a 'litigious and turbulent place' and a particularly bad outbreak of lawlessness called special attention to it in the year 1854. Government, anxious to select a man well qualified for the difficult post of subdivisional officer, chose Abdul Latif. It was a compliment to the young officer, and, realising this, Abdul Latif went to take up his new appointment fully determined to justify his choice. The lawlessness of which a district so near Calcutta was capable sixty years ago reads surprisingly to-day. Rioting, highway robberies and dacoities were of the commonest occurrence and life and property were nowhere safe outside the immediate circle of Jehanabad itself. This state of affairs the young subdivisional officer set himself with energy and determination to redress. Not only, however, was he burdened with this heavy task, he was subjected to annoyance and obstruction on the part of those who should have been his chief supporters. "The life of the subdivisional officer" it

was written of Abdul Latif's predecessor "was made miserable by the cheeky and fearless country attorneys and landlord's agents and other habitual litigants, all in league with the ministerial staff who continually kept him in hot water with them, and imposed on him, by their complaints to higher authority, the necessity of constantly answering changes and explaining his conduct." The task that thus fell to the lot of Abdul Latif during the five years that he remained at Jehanabad was a heavy one and needed all the tact at his command. How successfully he carried out that task was acknowledged on all sides. The subdivision as he left it was a very different place from the subdivision as he found it. When the time came for him to relinquish his post on transfer elsewhere Lord Ulick Browne, the Magistrate of Hooghly, wrote officially to thank him for his services, saying that he had 'discharged very satisfactorily the duties of a most difficult subdivision such as Jehanabad, where his loss is to be deeply regretted.'

Returning to Alipore in June 1857, Abdul Latif was able to resume his public and social activities which he had been forced very largely to abandon during his absence from Calcutta at Jehanabad. He was soon again busily engaged in promoting every scheme for the advancement of the Muhammadan community, welcomed everywhere as a capable and energetic ally. In 1860 he was made a member

of the Board of Examination for the civil and military services, an office he retained until his retirement. In the following year, although he had not yet completed twelve years' service, Sir John Peter Grant on the creation of the Bengal Legislative Council selected him as one of its original members and as the first Muhammadan to be appointed. This was a great honour for a man so young in the service and one holding an official position of no special distinction. About the same time also he was appointed to the Board of Commissioners created to deal with the difficulties experienced over the introduction of the income tax, which had aroused such unexpected opposition. Retiring in due course from his office as member of the Bengal Legislative Council on the expiry of his two years' term, he was especially thanked for his services by Sir Cecil Beadon, then Lieutenant Governor. For four years more he continued to work as a Deputy Magistrate at Alipore, being chosen in 1867 as the first Magistrate to preside over the new Suburban Police Court, a new court created to meet the needs of the growing city and the increasing importance of its southern suburbs. For ten years he performed the duties of this office, which entailed heavy work, and it says much for his energy and enthusiasm that after a hard day's work in the close atmosphere of a police court he was ready and willing to throw himself heart and soul into other duties, scarcely less onerous, on behalf of

the cause which he had so nearly at heart. In 1870 he was again appointed a member of the Bengal Legislative Council by Sir William Grey, and for the third time by Sir George Campbell who offered him the appointment in a letter, dated the 30th of December 1872, in which he wrote "I do not think the Muhammadan community could be better represented in the Legislative Council than by yourself." For a few months in 1879 he acted as Stipendiary Presidency Magistrate, afterwards being appointed to preside over the Suburban Police Court at Sealdah. There he remained for over seven years finally retiring in December 1887 on a special pension sanctioned by Government.

Such in brief outline is the official record of Abdul Latif's career. It is a record of quiet and consistent good service, marked by no great opportunities but fulfilling to the utmost its possibilities. It is not, however, in his official work that his chief claim to a place among the most distinguished men of Bengal in the nineteenth century lies. It is for his social and philanthropic work that his memory will ever be revered by the Muhammadan community for whose advancement he so earnestly strove. It is difficult in the present day when so many Muhammadans are to the fore in every walk of life to realise how unique was the position occupied by Abdul Latif and how large was the part he played in raising the community to the place it holds to-day. The pioneer of the

great forward movement, which the latter half of the nineteenth century saw among his co-religionists, he often stood well nigh alone. On many occasions he was the only Muhammadan at public ceremonies and social gatherings. Realising that the old days of race exclusiveness were over, he was eager to go everywhere and to know everyone. There was no branch of social life in which he did not take part, and there was no scheme for the benefit not only of his co-religionists but of the community generally that had not his hearty support. His correspondence was enormous, all classes of people appealing to him for advice and help, and many societies claiming his interest or his presence at their meetings.

The services of Abdul Latif to the cause of Muhammadan education it is difficult to exaggerate. In his earlier days, regarded from the modern standpoint, it was practically non-existent. The Muhammadans were literally following the dictum of the Kaliph Omar that 'whatever books differ from the Koran are pernicious and those which agree with it are superfluous.' To Abdul Latif belongs the credit of being among the first to see that however well this non-progressive policy may have sufficed in the days when the sword was mightier than the pen, it meant ruin to the community that persisted in it under modern conditions of universal progress and advance. Early in his career he began in a small way to do what he could to combat that spirit of

apathy and indifference which seemed to have fallen like a pall upon his co-religionists. Holding a series of conversazionés at his private house, he endeavoured to awaken in them an interest in modern topics. Papers were read on such subjects as the use of history, the rise and progress of navigation and commerce, the discovery of America, the history of civilisation and the principles of Muhammadan law. To encourage thought and enquiry on the part of the students of the Calcutta Madrassa he offered a prize for the best essay in Persian on the question—'How far would the inculcation of European sciences through the medium of the English language benefit Muhammadan students in the present circumstances of India and what are the most practicable means of imparting such instruction ?' The object of the prize which was advertised throughout India under the sanction of the Council of Education and published in the Calcutta Gazette was to draw the attention of the Muhammadan community to the question which was of such importance to its future welfare. Upon the frank acceptance of modern conditions and its adaptability to modern requirements depended its position in the new India that was rapidly coming into existence. The time allowed for sending in essays was five months and at the end of that time a very large number, coming from all parts of India, was found to have been sent in. Most of the essays, one reads

with astonishment, strongly deprecated the adoption of English education, quoting the Koran in support of their arguments and some even denouncing the giver of the prize himself as a traitor to his faith. A committee of four was appointed with the approval of the Council of Education to examine the essays, Sir Frederick Halliday, the first Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, consenting to be its President. The best essay was finally adjudged to be that of Syed Abdul Futteh, Arabic and Persian teacher at the Parsi Benevolent Institution in Bombay.

The founding of the Muhammadan Literary Society in April 1863 was another result of Abdul Latif's energy and enthusiasm, and one calculated to be of immense benefit to the Muhammadan community. Its object like that of the informal gatherings, which he had held for many years at his private residence, was to break down prejudice and exclusiveness, and to interest its members in present day politics and modern thought and learning. For the first time under its auspices representative Muhammadans were brought together on common ground and given an opportunity of openly expressing their opinions and aspirations in sympathetic hearing. In spite of its size and political importance the Muhammadan community had hitherto been without a voice and had been in no position to be consulted by or to give advice to Government. The regular

meeting together of the most educated members of the community was at once productive of good results, giving them greater unity and interest in public affairs and adding a new direction to Muhammadan thought and feeling. The annual conversazione, instituted by the Founder of the Society, was the first social gathering of its kind at that time and its effect in bringing all classes of Muhammadans together was widespread. On the occasion of the second annual conversazione at the Town Hall the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Cecil Beadon, spoke in warm terms of Abdul Latif's work in connection with the Society. "By founding the Muhammadan Literary Society" he said turning to Abdul Latif at the conclusion of his speech "you have successfully led the Muhammadans, not only of Bengal, but of India generally, to look beyond the narrow bounds of their own system, and to explore those accumulated treasures of thought and feeling which are to be found embodied in the English language; while by your active and reasonable representations on many occasions you have led them to form a just conception of the policy and intentions of the government, and to express their opinion freely. In this way you have naturally promoted a good understanding between this class of the community and their rulers and fellow-subjects; and so far as the present altered state of feeling is owing to your active and liberal exertions, to the judicious exercise

of your influence, and to the force of your example, I consider you entitled to the gratitude of your countrymen and the cordial acknowledgment of this Government."

Sir John Lawrence, the Viceroy, in addressing him on the same occasion said that it afforded him much pleasure to bestow upon him a suitable token of his approbation of his good services in this most excellent cause. The token took the form of a complete set of the Encyclopaedia Britannica inscribed in the Viceroy's own hand—

'Presented to Moulvi Abdul Latif in recognition of his services in promoting native education, especially the education of those who, like himself, belong to the Muhammadan religion.'

CALCUTTA, JOHN LAWRENCE,
25th March, 1867. *Governor-General.*"

In 1856 he had taken a leading part in promoting the Anglo-Persian establishment of the Calcutta Madrassa and later, finding this inadequate, he eagerly assisted in founding the Presidency College. Speaking on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the college by Lord Northbrook on the 23rd of February 1873, Abdul Latif laid stress upon the fact that "before the Presidency College was created, the Hindu community had its own college for High English education: the Christian

community of Calcutta had also its colleges for high English education: but the Muhammadan community had none." With the object of supplying that want Government had founded the Presidency College, which should give the advantages of an English education to all creeds and classes alike. Another service that he rendered to the community was to call public attention to the administration of the Mohsin Fund. He pointed out that, from a Fund founded by a Muhammadan primarily for Muhammadans, his co-religionists were not deriving the advantages which were their due in comparison with the Hindus who were benefiting from it to a far greater extent. Government, recognizing the justice of the claim, introduced changes into the administration of the Fund for the benefit of Muhammadans, setting aside a large sum to assist poor Muhammadan students throughout Bengal by paying two-thirds of their school fees, thus conferring an immense boon upon a poor community.

The first Agricultural Show organised in India was held at Alipore in the cold weather of 1863. In these days when such shows are of frequent and common occurrence all over India and their utility is generally recognised, it is astonishing to read of the excitement which the first one aroused. No sooner had the intention of Government to hold such a show been announced than vague and absurd rumours became generally current among the

ignorant masses of the population. To allay these unfounded apprehensions Nawab Abdul Latif, who was a member of the Exhibition Committee, took immediate steps. He wrote and published a paper in Hindustani and Bengali, which was approved by the authorities, pointing out that so far from endeavouring to spy out the resources of the land in order to impose fresh taxation, Government was only anxious to improve the condition of the people and to make known to them better and more modern methods. Widely circulated, Abdul Latif's sensible and convincing paper did much to inspire confidence in the people and to make the exhibition a success.

Two years later the first census of 1865-6 aroused the same unreasoning suspicion and excitement among the lower classes. No fewer than one hundred and ninety eight families left home rather than be enumerated, regarding the census as an intrusion into the privacy of their family life and as a raid upon their houses with the object of imposing fresh taxes upon them. Abdul Latif was a member of the Special Committee of Justices charged with carrying out the census, and again a paper of his, read before the Muhammadan Literary Society, which was translated into the vernacular and widely circulated at his own expense, helped largely towards inducing a saner and more practical view of government's object in enforcing it. About the same time a Bill was introduced into the

Legislative Council of the Government of India "to legalise under certain circumstances the remarriage of native converts to Christianity." Much dissatisfaction was expressed among the Muhammadan community owing to the fact that certain provisions of the Bill were regarded as being in direct opposition to the principles of Muhammadan Law. The importance of the changes proposed was much exaggerated among the ignorant classes who came to regard the Bill as a serious attack upon their religion and as an attack upon the sanctity of their women. To counteract this unwarrantable belief Moulvi Abdul Latif convened a meeting of the leaders of Muhammadan society at his own house and as a result a memorial was drawn up and submitted to the Legislative Council, pointing out in respectful terms the opposition that had been aroused, and the objection to the Bill from the Muhammadan point of view. The result was that the Muhammadan community was exempted from the operation of the act, which shortly afterwards became law.

In 1870 the lower classes of the Muhammadan community were again thrown into a state of excitement by the conduct and preaching of the Wahabis who were rapidly becoming a serious thorn in the side of Government. Moulvi Abdul Latif, quick to see the harm that they might do and the retrograde nature of their teaching which was opposed to all his theories of progress and modern advancement,

at once took steps to counteract this influence. He obtained from Moulvi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur, one of the most celebrated religious teachers of the day, an exposition of the law on the duty of Muhammadans in British India towards the ruling power. This he embodied in a paper which he read to the Muhammadan Literary Society on November 23rd 1870, showing clearly from the classical works of Muhammadan Jurisprudence that British India was Dar-ul-Islam and that as such it would be unlawful and irreligious for Muhammadans to preach a Jahad against it as the ruling power. Not only was this address fully approved by all the leading Muhammadans of India, it received also the approbation of the Muftis of Mecca who were consulted on the subject.

On the occasion of the Imperial assembly at Delhi and the proclamation of the Queen-Empress came the first titular honour bestowed upon Abdul Latif by government, the sanad of the title of Khan Bahadur being personally presented to him at Belvedere by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Ashley Eden, in the following August. In making the presentation Sir Ashley acknowledged how much the recipient had done 'to promote the interests of his co-religionists' adding that to him it 'was mainly due that they were then adopting the study of western literature and fitting themselves to compete with the young men of other classes.'

In the following year a committee of the English House of Commons was appointed to enquire into the economic and financial condition of India, the Viceroy being asked to nominate representative Indians to proceed to England to give evidence. Abdul Latif had the distinction of being chosen by Lord Northbrook to represent the Muhammadan community and, welcoming the opportunity of making the needs of his fellow-countrymen better known to the English people, he accepted the office and was prepared to start for England. The dissolution of Parliament, however, caused the abandonment of the plan. Seven years later, another opportunity for usefulness outside the narrow limits of his ordinary official studies was afforded him. Almost at a moment's notice in December 1886 he was asked officially to proceed to Bhopal to undertake the important duties of Prime Minister of that state. It was a special and temporary appointment deemed desirable under special circumstances by the Government of India and the following letter of June 5th 1886, written to him by Sir Lepel Griffin, Agent to the Governor General for Central India, on his relinquishing the office, is the best evidence of the manner in which he performed has difficult duties.

"It gives me the sincerest pleasure" wrote Sir Lepel "to communicate to you by direction of the government of India, the following remarks contained

in a letter from the Foreign Secretary of the 28th of May—

'I am to request you to inform Nawab Abdul Latif that the services which he has rendered to the Bhopal State, under trying and difficult circumstances, are fully appreciated by the Government of India. His Excellency the Viceroy has consented to appoint an English Minister in his place; but this appointment involves no disapproval of the Nawab's action which appears to His Excellency to have been marked by ability and uprightness. Nawab Abdul Latif will leave the Bhopal State with a reputation not only unimpaired but increased by the occurrences of the last few months.'

"To these expressions of approval of His Excellency and the Government of India," continues Sir Lepel "I desire to add my personal testimony to the value of your services.

"It was in December 1885 that, at my request and at a day's notice, you left Calcutta for Bhopal to take up the temporary charge of an exceedingly difficult appointment, until the return from England of an English Officer, whom Her Highness the Begum at the time desired to appoint as Minister. Your provisional appointment was fully approved by Her Highness. From that time to this you have conducted your duties at Bhopal to my entire satisfaction, and with singular ability, discretion, and integrity. I should have been well content to

see you remain in office. I have always held that, in a Muhammadan State like Bhopal, a Muhammadan Minister is the most suitable: and His Excellency the Viceroy and the Government of India have also strongly held this opinion.

"The appointment of an English Minister of high character and great administrative experience will doubtless be, in many particulars, for the advantage of the Bhopal State; but it is no more than justice to you to place on official record the fact that the Government are altogether satisfied with your services in Bhopal, and that an English Minister has been selected and nominated by His Excellency the Viceroy in accordance with the urgent and reiterated requests of Her Highness the Begum. It was in accordance with the principle which renders the English Government always disinclined to interfere except in the last necessity, with the internal affairs of Native States; and fully recognising his obligation to show the utmost deference and consideration for Her Highness' wishes, that His Excellency the Viceroy intimated his willingness to accede to her request and select a suitable English Officer for the post of Minister.

"The Government of India have assured you that your reputation will be not only unimpaired, but increased by your conduct during the last few months.

"To this assurance I can add nothing further

than my sincere wish for your future prosperity, and the expression of the feeling of warm friendship and esteem which you have inspired in myself, and in those Political Officers who have had the pleasure and advantage of your acquaintance in Central India."

Abdul Latif, freed at last after so many years' service from all official duties, was able from this time onward to devote his whole time to the causes he had so much at heart. During thirty-six years' service he had only been absent from duty for four months on sick leave—a splendid record that few servants of the Crown could equal. On his retirement from government service he was granted a special pension on the generous scale of 600 Rs. a month. He had been decorated two years previously with the companionship of the Order of the Indian Empire and in 1887 the year of the Jubilee of the Queen-Empress, the title of Nawab Bahadur was conferred upon him. This is the highest Indian title to which a Muhammadan can attain and its bestowal upon Abdul Latif was universally recognised as a fitting and crowning honour to the services he had rendered, not only to Government but to his own fellow countrymen of all castes and creeds. For six years longer he was enabled to continue his ceaseless activities, never flagging in his zeal for the welfare of his co-religionists and enjoying to the full the unmistakable signs

of success of his life's labours. Beloved and respected by all, his last years were full of happiness, his wonderful strength and vitality remaining with him almost till the end. He died on the 18th of July, 1893 in Calcutta at the age of sixty-five.

Many were the tributes paid to his memory immediately after his death. Every newspaper in India bore testimony to the great work that he had done, while many of the English papers were scarcely less appreciative. The *Times* of September the 4th, 1893 published a short memoir that shows how strongly the splendid achievements of Abdul Latif had impressed the British public. The tribute herein paid him may well be quoted as typical of the many that appeared.

"The skill, the firmness of resolve, and the unwearied tact and moderation with which he carried out his self-appointed task during 40 chequered years," it ran, "would form a noble theme for a biographer. Here we can only lament the loss which many who are trying to do good work for India have sustained by his death. It was, however, characteristic of the man to effect his purpose by means of gradual corporate effort, rather than by his individual will; and he leaves behind him a body of followers both able and determined to carry on his labours. The association which he formed exactly 30 years ago, under the modest name of the Muhammadan Literary Society, has grown into a power in the land, and the

mother of many affiliated societies throughout Northern India. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that almost the whole Muhammadan community in Bengal now accepts as a matter of course the views which its leaders refused even to discuss with the young reformer 40 years ago. This is his best public epitaph. In private life his gentleness of manner and his sincere, if rather oriental, courtesy, with the store of experience and anecdotes gathered during 65 eventful years, endeared him to many friends. The British Government gave him what it had to give in the shape of titles and honours, but it is as a Muhammadan who led forth his countrymen into new fields of achievement and new realms of knowledge, without losing his own orthodoxy, that Abdul Latif has won his place in Indian history."

Well did Sir Richard Temple write of him as 'the most progressive and enlightened among the Muhammadans of Bengal.' A self-made man, with few advantages of birth or position to help him at the start, he rose to be one of the most trusted advisers of Government and the friend of the greatest in the land. His charming manners and innate courtesy of disposition fitted him to adorn any society, while his knowledge of men and affairs and his gift of conversation made him a delightful and interesting companion. Above all he possessed in full measure an overflowing sympathy with his fellowmen and an intense desire to help forward by every means in his

power their happiness and prosperity. Quick to judge in which direction the true interests of his Muhammadan countrymen lay, he lost no opportunity, in spite of strong opposition, of pointing it out to them by every means in his power. He served to combine in his character all the best traits of the East and the West. He had the energy of the Anglo-Saxon, tempered by the cautiousness and tact of the Oriental, and the directness and indomitability of the West combined with the patience and industry of the East. When once he had decided what course to follow he pursued it through good report and ill with quiet determination till success crowned his efforts. It was truly said of him that he was the life and centre of Indian society in Calcutta for he alone was the friend equally of European, Muhammadan and Hindu, who all perforce sank their differences and jealousies under the influence of his good nature and quick sympathy. 'This man ne'er lost a friend nor made a foe' might well be taken as his epitaph. The Muhammadan community owes a debt of gratitude to Nawab Abdul Latif Bahadur which it behoves it never to forget. He found it backward and apathetic, sunk in ignorance and prejudice and content to see itself surpassed in every walk of life by the Hindu community, helplessly clinging to its old ideals and shibboleths and obstinately refusing to recognise the march of events and the necessity of change. He left it awake and

eager to regain the ground that had been lost, struggling manfully against great odds and assiduously equipping itself with the weapons which it had so long despised. To Nawab Abdul Latif will always remain the honour of having been among the first to point out the road of progress along which the Muhammadan community has since made such great strides.

Keshub Chandra Sen

KESHUB CHANDRA SEN.

1838—1884

No name in the Annals of Bengal in the nineteenth century is more widely known than that of Keshub Chandra Sen. Spoken of as 'Indian's greatest son' by so eminent an Orientalist as Professor Max Müller, no Hindu before him ever achieved so widespread a reputation or drew so closely the attention of both East and West towards his life and teaching. His was one of the few names that was familiar during his lifetime not only among the vast millions who inhabit the Indian Empire but among European nations whose knowledge of India and all things Indian was then far slighter than it is to-day. Born at a time when Western education, half understood and imperfectly applied, had yet caught the imagination of the East, Keshub Chandra Sen's life coincided with one of the most important and interesting intellectual revolutions that India has ever seen. After long centuries of isolation East and West had met, and fusion of thought and speech had begun. On the one hand stood western civilization, with its latest scientific inventions, its latest literary achievements and its latest artistic triumphs

on the other stood eastern culture, effete and decaying, strangled in the grip of custom and tradition. The full force of modern thought had been let loose about the old ideals and the old beliefs, threatening to overwhelm them in its first impetuous rush. There was imminent danger that the new system of life and thought, while sweeping away the old beliefs, might raise no new ones to supply their place. The restraints that the old caste system had enforced upon life generally, socially, morally and mentally had been roughly cast aside, and the new civilisation had as yet failed to impose other restraints that had the same binding force. The work that Keshub Chandra Sen was called upon to do was to combine all that was best in the old with all that was best in the new and to prevent a break with the old before a new religion and a new philosophy of life were found to which men might adhere. It was the old problem which so many have sought to solve without success, the reconciliation of the old and the new, of the East and the West. At a time when chaos threatened, Keshub Chandra Sen had the ability and the courage to foumulate a new belief, purified and refined, out of the old, and at the same time the power to lead men after him along the lines which he laid down. The great and widespread influence that his life and conduct had even upon those who did not follow him in his new belief, set

him apart as one of the moving spirits of the day.

Claiming descent from the ancient Sen Kings of Bengal, the family from which Keshub sprang had been resident for some generations at Garifa, now known as Gouripur, some twenty-four miles above Calcutta. His great grandfather, Gokul Chandra Sen of the Vaidiya caste was a poor, honest, hard-working villager, respected by his fellows but of no particular distinction. It was his son Ram Kamal Sen, Keshub's grandfather, who first raised the family to a position of dignity and affluence. He was one of that first little company of Hindus in Bengal who were quick to take advantage of all that western civilisation offered by adapting themselves to western culture and western modes of thought. Yet there was little in his earliest years to give promise of the brilliant career that was later to be his. With little education, learning English at a small Hindu school up the river where there were no dictionaries and no text books, he was forced from an early age to earn his own living. He began at the very lowest rung of the literary ladder, obtaining a post as assistant type-setter at the Asiatic Society's press on a monthly salary of only eight rupees. For eight years he plodded on in this humble post, throwing all his energies into the work and doing meanwhile all that lay in his power to improve his education and prepare himself

for a more important post. His knowledge and industry attracting the attention of the officials of the Society, he was appointed a clerk in the office. Later he became native secretary, and continued to rise step by step, his capability and activity keeping pace with each new advance, until he eventually rose to be a member of the Council of the Asiatic Society whose service he had first entered as a type-setter on eight rupees a month. His abilities becoming widely recognised, he was offered the responsible and distinguished post of Treasurer of the Calcutta Mint. His success in this post led to the Dewanship of the Bank of Bengal with an income of 2,000 Rs. a month and an assured and influential position in public life. Unspoilt by his marvellous success, his strenuous efforts for the welfare of his fellow-countrymen kept pace with his own advancement. In the establishment of the Hindu College in 1817, and the Sanskrit College in 1824, he took a keen interest, while to promote the acquisition of English by his countrymen he entered upon and carried through the great labour of producing a dictionary in English and Bengali, which Dr. Marshman, the celebrated Serampore Missionary, spoke of as 'the fullest, most valuable work of its kind which we possess and which will be the most lasting monument of Ram Kamal Sen's industry, zeal and erudition.' His work on behalf of education was supplemented by exertions in the cause of sanitation on

which he held views far in advance of his day, and by generous gifts to Hospitals and to the District Charitable Society.

Although Keshub was only five years old when his grandfather died, his early association with him and the deep veneration in which he was held by all in any way associated with him cannot fail to have impressed him at the most impressionable period of his life. During those first five years the child and the old man had become firm friends, and so highly did his grandfather think of his early precocity that he is reported to have said, 'Keshub alone will be able to sustain the family reputation.' Keshub's father, Peary Mohan Sen was the second son of Ram Kamal whom he only survived four years, dying at the early age of thirty four. He was a young man of exemplary life and character and his early death was a great loss to Keshub. His mother, however, proved not only an adequate guardian but a source of inspiration to her son, who always gratefully acknowledged how much he owed to her early training. His youth was spent amidst the pleasantest surroundings. His grandfather, proud of the position he had won by his own exertions and ability took a delight in providing his family with every comfort and luxury. 'I was reared' said Keshub at a later date 'by a wealthy father and grandfather. Opulence and luxury surrounded my childhood, but as I grew up my mind began to show the spirit of natural poverty.'

At the age of seven he was entered at the Hindu College, in the foundation of which his grandfather had taken so great an interest twenty eight years before. From the first he distinguished himself, carrying off prizes for English and Mathematics several years in succession. Among his school fellows he proved himself a born leader. In the playground he was continually inventing new games, which he taught the other boys who entered with enthusiasm into the parts that Keshub assigned to them. Magic and juggling were his especial boyish delights and he himself acquired considerable dexterity in the juggler's art. Quiet and reserved, he hid even in his young days great force of character beneath a retiring manner, and amongst young companions, whose morals were far from beyond reproach, he kept himself pure and straight. For immorality and falsehood he always had the greatest aversion and contempt. A keen student, he devoted by far the greater portion of his time to his studies and to such effect did he apply himself that at the age of fourteen he was in the first senior class of the school Department of the Hindu College. Unfortunately his studies were interrupted by his transference to the Metropolitan College on its inception in 1853, but though started under such promising auspices that college did not fulfil its expectations, and in the following year those boys who had left the Hindu college in order to join it

found themselves seeking readmission into the institution they had deserted. During his last years at college Keshub devoted himself chiefly to the study of mental and moral philosophy, into the wide range of which he plunged with youthful ardour and enthusiasm.

Leaving college Keshub found time to enter upon various projects which had long been forming in his mind. Education he conceived to be the first need of his fellow countrymen and so far as he was able, by his own individual efforts, he set himself to further the great cause. From the wider diffusion of knowledge and culture would, he hoped, spring in due course all the moral and social advancement that he so ardently desired, and his first attempts, though modestly begun, had this great end in view. Soon after leaving college he started a Literary Society, known as the British Indian Society, for the promotion of literature and science, and shortly afterwards he opened the Coltolla Evening School to which he gathered numbers of young men from the neighbourhood of his own house, he and his friends instructing them in English literature add philosophy. Shakespeare, first prominently introduced to Indian students by Captain Richardson, was one of the favourite studies of the day and Keshub was an enthusiast. Hamlet was his favourite play and he himself took the main part in a performance given by members of his Evening School. His

acquaintance not only with Shakespeare but with English literature generally was surprising, and he soon inspired the members of his Society and Evening School with his own love of it.

Greater, however, than his desire for intellectual improvement was his desire for moral and religious advancement. Pre-eminently of a religious turn of mind, he had from the first attempted to combine secular education with the maintenance of religious beliefs. Of the difficulties that beset him he was fully aware. To reconcile the old traditions and superstitions with modern education was impossible. Education as he himself admitted had unsettled his mind. He had given up the old faith but he had gained no positive system of belief to replace it. Towards that end, however, he devoted the most anxious and searching enquiries. By continual study and contemplation he sought to acquire the truth. Stern and austere at this time, he lived the life almost of an ascetic. Eating neither flesh nor fish, he gave up card playing and novel reading and all the theatrical and conjuring performances that he had previously so much loved. Beyond the friends associated with him in the Literary Society and the Evening School that he had founded, he saw scarcely any one, his chief friends being the Rev. James Long, Norendra Nath Sen and Devendra Nath Tagore. Buried in his books or sunk in thought he spent long hours alone, turning his back

completely on the lighter side of life. Serious, earnest and as yet unsatisfied, he bent all his energies on solving the great questions of life to which the old beliefs had given him so inadequate a reply.

In 1857 Keshub Chandra Sen founded the 'Goodwill Fraternity.' It was a purely religious and devotional association and here he was at his best, lecturing and discussing the various questions which he had so closely studied in his long hours of solitude and meditation. Full and free discussion on every religious topic was desired. "I established in my earlier days" wrote Keshub in later life "a small fraternity in my own house to which I gave the somewhat singular but significant name of the 'Goodwill Fraternity.' I did not allow myself to harbour sectarianism, but preached to my friends these two doctrines—God our Father, Every Man our Brother." It was in these gatherings that Keshub's oratorical powers, which were later to exercise so great an influence, first began to develop and expand. Already his eloquence was remarkable, exercising a strong fascination over all who heard him. Upon the minds of the young men and boys whom he addressed in the 'Goodwill Fraternity' gatherings, it had a powerful effect and many of those who met him here for the first time became in after life his most devoted followers. His intense earnestness and glowing enthusiasm inspired others

with the same spirit and the fame of the 'Goodwill Fraternity' gatherings rapidly grew. Among the many attracted by the reports of Keshub's eloquence and spirituality one of the most distinguished was Devendra Nath Tagore, and it was at one of the meetings of the 'Fraternity' that they first met. Between them was destined to grow up a firm and lasting friendship that not even religious differences in later days was able to destroy. Devendra Nath Tagore, belonging to one of the wealthiest and most prominent families in Calcutta, was then the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, founded by Ram Mohan Roy thirty years before, and it was doubtless very largely owing to his influence that Keshub definitely joined that body in 1857. This decided step at once involved him in difficulties with his family and relatives, since he refused in consequence to undergo the ceremony of initiation at the hands of the family guru, which would at that time in the ordinary course have taken place. Every effort was made to induce him to give way but in the face of persuasion, threats, and entreaties he stood firm, believing that he had at last found in the new faith that he had adopted the way of life which he had so long sought.

The starting of the Brahmo School in 1859 was one of Keshub's first activities in the Brahmo Samaj. It was a development of the 'Goodwill Fraternity' and the Coltolla Evening School, and was destined to play an important part in the

history of the movement. It not only placed the hitherto vague conception of Brahmoism on a sound and rational basis of philosophy but it bound together a growing company of young men eager for the advancement of truth and learning. The Brahmo School at first held weekly meetings every Sunday at which Keshub and Devendra Nath Tagore were the leading spirits, the enthusiastic metaphysical discourses of the one contrasting with the closely reasoned and classical Bengali discourses on the faith of Brahmoism of the other.

Not content with his earnest personal appeals in the cause of progress, Keshub was ambitious of a wider public and from this time onwards sought to spread his opinions through the press. His first tract was characteristically called 'Young Bengal, this is for you.' In it he drew attention to the fact that a period of scepticism and irreligion had succeeded the sudden intellectual revival in Bengal and urged that it was essential for true progress that religious development should go hand in hand with intellectual advancement. Education, unfortified by religious principles, he argued, leads neither to the social, moral nor political welfare of a nation. This first tract was followed by a dozen more, all deeply religious, forming the first beginnings of Brahmo literature and setting forth with power and authority the principles of the new faith. About this time also he founded the *Sangat*

Sava, another association for religious discussion, to which many of the foremost Brahmos of later days traced their first inspiration and enthusiasm.

In the midst of these philanthropic activities, Keshub had endeavoured to follow the universal practice then in vogue in Bengal for a young man to adopt the family profession. In 1859 in accordance with family tradition he entered the Bank of Bengal, beginning as a clerk on the modest stipend of 25 Rs. a month. Though the work was utterly uncongenial to him, so well did he perform his duties that before a year was passed his salary was doubled and apart from his family influence it was certain that speedy promotion awaited him. But the conviction soon took deep root in him that he was called upon to give up his life entirely to his educational and religious work and two years after entering the Bank he astonished his friends by resigning his position. He was the first young man of his rank and class to give up his worldly prospects in order to devote himself entirely to the advancement of his fellowcountrymen, and his disinterestedness and unselfishness greatly enhanced his already growing reputation. In 1860 he visited Krishnagar, on one of his first famous missionary expeditions, and so far broke with family customs and tradition as to accompany Devendra Nath Tagore on a voyage to Ceylon by sea. Though the spell had been broken by the journey of Ram Mohan Roy to England thirty

years before, it still needed considerable courage to break through the strong opposition of relatives and friends among whom the prejudice against crossing the sea was still deeply ingrained. But Keshub's voyage to Ceylon was only the prelude to the longer voyage to England which he was already contemplating and which was to take form ten years hence.

Still further convinced that it was to the press that he must look even more than to his personal exertions and his personal eloquence, if he would successfully advance the cause of education and religion, Keshub determined to start a periodical of his own. In August 1861 with the help of his friends, among whom Man Mohun Ghose was one of the leading spirits, he brought out the first number of the Indian Mirror as a fortnightly journal. There was at that time only one English newspaper in Calcutta conducted by an Indian Editor, and it is an interesting fact that both these papers, the *Hindu Patriot* and the *Indian Mirror* are still in existence to-day. Although the latter paper afterwards passed out of Keshub's control he owned various other newspapers at different times, many of which commanded a wide circulation. In all of them he attempted to make fair consideration and conciliation, the prevailing notes, and though they ardently supported the schemes which he had at heart he was careful to avoid the adoption of a violently partisan attitude, opening his columns freely to all

shades of opinion and permitting full discussion in them.

Formally appointed a minister of the Brahmo Samaj in 1862 by Devendra Nath Tagore, he was installed with much ceremony in the latter's house, the title of *Brahmananda*, the Rejoicer in God, being conferred upon him. The occasion of the installation marks another step in the advance towards the emancipation of the women of Bengal. Desirous that his wife, whom he had married according to Hindu rites many years before, should be present at the ceremony, he brought her to Calcutta from the family residence at Bally where she had been living with his relatives. The latter strongly opposed this further departure from orthodox Hindu custom, and his persistence meant for the time practical excommunication. But Keshub was convinced that the time had come when Indian women should play a more prominent part in life, being given a better education and a greater freedom of action, and he held on his way undismayed. A truce between him and his family, patched up in the following year, was again broken by dissensions over the *Jat Karma*, the thanksgiving for the birth of Keshub's third child, his mother alone remaining by him. Gradually, however, as the years advanced Keshub's strong personality and winning disposition not only overcame the opposition of his relatives but succeeded in carrying them with

him as some of his most enthusiastic supporters in the cause of progress.

In 1864 Keshub started on an extensive missionary tour with the object of awakening the whole of India to participate in the general progress which he had so strenuously advocated in Calcutta, Everywhere he was received with popular acclamation, his eloquence and enthusiasm earning for him in Madras the name of 'The Thunderbolt of Bengal.' In almost every place he visited he found the same spirit of enquiry and eagerness for knowledge, and he returned from the tour greatly encouraged and more firmly convinced than before of the great work that lay before him and his followers.

Meanwhile unfortunate dissensions had been gradually arising in the Brahmo Samaj itself. Devoted to each other as Devendra Nath Tagore and Keshub were, it had been for some time evident to both that, firm as their friendship might be, their opinions must eventually to a very great extent separate them. Devendra Nath Tagore represented the older generation of the Rennaissance, fully imbued with the necessity of advancing with the times yet cautious and conservative, anxious to break with the past as little as might be. Keshub on the other hand represented the second generation of the reform movement, less bound to the old traditions and the old beliefs, eager to throw off all that retarded progress and to hold fast only

to the truth. Devendra Nath Tagore had indeed discarded the Brahmanical thread and had appointed Keshub, who was not a Brahmin, to the ministry but he was at heart strongly conservative and there were many innovations advocated by Keshub and the younger generation to which he could not subscribe. Keshub had, for instance, taken up the cause of widow remarriage with enthusiasm, but here Devendra Nath Tagore could not follow him. The still more difficult question of intermarriage had also arisen. The members of the Brahmo Samaj were of all castes and having abandoned all caste restrictions, the question of intermarriage among them was bound to arise. The first intermarriage according to the Brahmo ritual took place in August 1862 but serious doubts were expressed as to its legality, the essential Hindu rites having been omitted. It was a subject which Keshub was to take up later with good results but meanwhile it widened the breach that was gradually separating the old and the new element in the Brahmo Samaj.

Finally breaking with the old Samaj under Devendra Nath Tagore, Keshub Chandra Sen founded the new Brahmo Samaj of India on November the 11th, 1860. The new Samaj was to be on the broadest lines and open to any human being no matter what his creed or caste might be. One of its main objects was to include among its members men of all nationalities and races. It was

to be a world-wide church, and its doctrines were to include all those that were highest and best in the Bible, the Koran, the Zendavesta and the Shastras, extracts from all of which met for the first time side by side as the creed of the new Brahmo Samaj. 'The wide universe is the Temple of God' ran the motto of the new Faith 'Wisdom is the pure land of pilgrimage: Truth is the everlasting Scripture: Faith is the root of all religion: Love is the true Scriptural Culture: the Destruction of Selfishness is the true asceticism.' It was to be a universal church founded on broad principles to which the whole world might subscribe if it would. Keshub and his little band of followers having given up all their worldly prospects threw themselves with true missionary zeal into the work of spreading the tenets of their faith. To all parts of India Keshub carried his message of peace and good will, being everywhere welcomed by officials and non-officials alike and meeting much sympathy from Lord Lawrence, the Governor General, whose guest he was on several occasions in Simla. On the 24th of January 1868, the thirty-eighth anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj as founded by Ram Mohan Roy, was laid the foundation stone of the Brahma Mandir, the new church of the new Faith. It was opened for service in August 1869.

Keshub's visit to England in 1870, like that of Ram Mohan Roy just forty years before, aroused

much criticism and opposition. Nothing daunted however, by fierce denunciation or evil prognostications he set out in the spring of that year, reaching England in the month of March. Of his first European impressions he has left an amusing account. The luxury of hotel life astonished him while what surprised him still more at first sight was the hurry and bustle of the streets, which contrasted so strikingly with the slow movement and general leisureliness of the East. In England he met with a warm welcome. Lord Lawrence and many other retired officials who had known him proved themselves good friends and introduced him to all that was best in English society. Among the many whom he met were Dean Stanley, Professor Max Müller, Mr. Gladstone and John Stuart Mill. With the first two he formed a life long friendship. He was graciously received in private audience by Queen Victoria, who presented him with a large engraving of herself and copies of her two books, inscribed in her own hand 'To Keshub Chandra Sen from Victoria, R. Sept. 1870.' He visited no fewer than fourteen of the chief towns of England and Scotland, the National Indian Association which has survived till the present day being founded by Miss Mary Carpenter to promote the cause that Keshub had so closely at heart. After six months in England, he left for India strengthened and encouraged by contact with some of the greatest

minds of the day and with his loyalty to the British Government greatly intensified. So deeply was he touched by the universal kindness he met with from all classes, from Her Majesty the Queen to the poorest peasant that, as he himself said, his loyalty to the great nation which had done so much for India became a part henceforward of his religion.

One of the first acts of Keshub on his return to India was the establishment of the Indian Reform Association on the lines of the most modern associations with which he had become acquainted in England. Its object was 'the social and moral reformation of the natives of India,' and it was divided into five branches, each with its special work. One branch occupied itself with the supply of cheap and good literature which was to be made easily accessible to all : a second was entrusted with charitable relief : a third with all matters concerning education : a fourth with the improvement of the position of Indian women, and a fifth with temperance work. Impressed with the immense power wielded by the press in England, especially by the daily papers headed by '*The Times*,' Keshub endeavoured to improve upon the newspapers he had formerly published, bringing out a weekly pice paper, under the management of the new association, called the Sulav Samachar. Being the first paper of its kind published in India it achieved immediate popularity. Its influence in its first days of prosperity was

far reaching, and it did much not only to bring home to a very wide public the lessons which Keshub sought to teach but succeeded further in advancing the cause of cheap and popular journalism.

Nothing had impressed Keshub as more sharply in contrast with conditions in his own country than the high position occupied by women in English life. Coming from the midst of his own community, in whose public life women played no part, he was greatly struck by the fact that in England not only had women taken their place on an equality with men in social life but that they were everywhere actively participating in all public and philanthropic movements of the day. In spite of their unrestricted social intercourse, the deference and respect with which they met was particularly striking. His English experiences urged Keshub to take up again more enthusiastically than before the cause of the women of India and one of the most successful branches of the Indian Reform association was the Normal School for Indian ladies. Soon after its commencement there were no fewer than fifty Hindu ladies of the highest castes regularly attending the school, receiving instruction on modern lines such as had never before been obtainable by Indian women. So cordially did Government approve of the object and work of the Normal School that it offered a grant of Rs. 2,000 annually towards its maintenance.

Of temperance work Keshub had seen much in England and this also he took up with renewed energy on his return. He had long been aware how firm a hold intemperance threatened to gain upon a certain section of his fellow countrymen and he set himself to combat the evil by every means in his power. Here as elsewhere in the cause of progress he set his hopes chiefly upon the rising generation and realising that the young men of his day were growing up largely without the restraints, which the old caste system had exercised over its members, he endeavoured to instill into them a horror of intemperance and the degradation that it brought inevitably in its train.

One of the greatest permanent measures that Keshub was able to accomplish was the passing of the Brahmo Marriage Act of 1872. The difficult question of intermarriage among members of the Brahmo community had for years awaited a definite solution. The Advocate General when referred to had pronounced against the legality of such marriages on the ground that they complied with no recognised form of marriage ceremony. It was apparent that only legislation could set such marriages on a safe and legal footing. But many difficulties had to be overcome before the Bill became law. The Adi-Brahmo Samaj, the old section of the Brahmo community under Devendra Nath Tagore, considered its own marriage ceremonies

amply sufficient and it was difficult so to frame the bill as to prevent it doing injustice to those who declined to take advantage of its provisions. The original intention of the Act was to render legal all marriages not performed according to any recognised form of religion, but this practical institution of civil marriage met with a strong protest on the ground that it would totally destroy the ancient social organization of the country, allowing any man to marry whomsoever he pleased irrespective of caste. The Bill was therefore altered to apply only to members of the Brahmo Samaj and it was expressly stipulated that the contracting parties should state that they did not profess the Hindu, Muhammadan, Christian, Parsi, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religion. To avoid any possible hardships, the act expressly stated that 'nothing in this act contained shall affect the validity of any marriage not solemnised under its provisions; nor shall this act be deemed directly or indirectly to affect the validity of any mode of contracting marriage; but if the validity of any such mode shall hereafter come into question before any Court, such question shall be decided as if this act had not been passed.' The Act finally became law on the 19th March 1872 and Keshub rightly regarded it as one of his greatest triumphs. It was an official recognition of the Brahmo Samaj, providing for its convenience a special law. Henceforward the Brahmo Samaj had its own form of marriage

service which was as legal as that of any other religion in India.

It was inevitable that Keshub's many activities should stir up enmity in certain quarters and he had like all reformers to submit to a storm of abuse from those who were strongly opposed to his views. Though he numbered his friends among all ranks and all classes there were many who were not generous enough to agree to differ from him on certain points and to acknowledge the good work he was undoubtedly doing. From Government he met with great encouragement. Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy accompanied by his daughter paid him the almost unprecedented honour of a visit at his private house after having visited the Normal School in 1874. With many other officials from the highest to the lowest he was on cordial terms of friendship. All those who came in contact with him were impressed not only with his sincerity but with his moderation. He was anxious only to avoid on the one hand social and political stagnation, and on the other a too sweeping and radical programme of reform. He was convinced that progress must be worked out slowly and with infinite precaution and that the cause of true reform could never be advanced by sudden upheavals but only gradually evolved step by step, by retaining the good and sedulously eliminating the evil.

In 1878 Keshub's daughter was married to the

Maharaja of Cooch Behar. Considerable opposition to the marriage was manifested by a certain section of his followers and difficulties arose over the marriage ceremonies, which the relatives of the Maharaja naturally wished to invest with Hindu rites. The controversy unfortunately led to a further split in the Brahmo Samaj, but opposition served only to stir Keshub to greater exertions and the wonderful revival of that year led to his proclamation of the New Dispensation. To him the harmony of religions was the first mission of the Brahmo Samaj. The best that was in Hinduism, Christianity, Muhammadanism and Buddhism should be welded together in the Church of the New Dispensation. To spread abroad his views, in addition to his own personal eloquence, he turned again to the press and himself started *The Sunday Mission* and later, *The Liberal* and *The New Dispensation.* All his publications were studiously moderate and though by no means lacking in courage and independence, were always courteous to the opinions and beliefs of others. He never denied access to his columns to fair and honest criticism of his work, and throughout he was consistent in following the motto that he had adopted, 'Try all things; hold fast to that which is good.' His Catholicism was proved by the number of his friends who were drawn from all walks of life. He was respected and esteemed by so orthodox a

Hindu as Maharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore, by so good a Muhammadan as Nawab Abdul Latif and by such men of western light and learning of another faith as Professor Max Müller and Dean Stanley.

Loyalty was one of the watch-words of the Brahmo Samaj. None realised more fully than Keshub Chandra Sen how essential it was to the peace and welfare of his country that the British Government should receive the loyal and hearty co-operation of his fellow countrymen. "You are bound to be loyal to your divinely-appointed sovereign" he wrote to his people. "Not to be loyal argues base ingratitude and absence of faith in Providence. You are bound to be loyal to the British Government, that came to your rescue as God's ambassador when your country was sunk in ignorance and superstition and hopeless jejuneness, and has since lifted you to your present high position. Honour your Sovereign and the entire ruling body with fervent loyalty. The more loyal we are, the more we shall advance with the aid of our rulers in the path of moral, social and political reformation."

Worn by his ceaseless activities and worried by dissensions among his followers, Keshub's health now began to give serious cause for alarm. Visits to Darjeeling and Simla effected only temporary relief and he himself was the first to realise the fatal nature of the malady from which he was suffering. The knowledge that his end was near served to urge

him to one final spell of activity. His last public lecture was perhaps his finest effort. 'Asia's message to Europe' was one of love, unity and concord. It was the offer of a purely unsectarian and universal religion that should embrace all creeds and all nations in one great brotherhood of perfect harmony. Such being the message that he had tried to preach, the dissensions among his own followers were a great grief to him. He was forced to recognise that men who had thrown off the time-honoured religious restraints under which they had been born were especially prone to dissensions among themselves. The old unquestioned authority having been set aside, it was difficult to find a common meeting ground where all might join. It seemed to him that what was needed was some broad rule of life by which, however much they might differ in details, they might strive to live. With this object he drew up the *Nava Samhita*, the New Way of Life which enunciated an ideal course of conduct, personal, social, domestic and moral to which every man should strive to attain. These are briefly the twelve rules of life whereby the ideal man should endeavour to live—

1. To look upon woman as the daughter of God and regard her with honour and affection and to cherish no impure thought or wish in regard to her.

2. To forgive and love one's enemies and not to indulge in anger when provoked by them.

3. To rejoice in other man's happiness and not to harbour envy or jealousy.

4. To be humble in disposition and to harbour no pride of position, wealth, learning, power or religion.

5. To live the life of an ascetic and to take no undue thought for the morrow. To seek not the riches of the world.

6. To give religious instruction to one's household.

7. To love justice, and give every man his due.

8. To speak the truth and nothing but the truth, and to hate all manner of falsehood.

9. To be charitable to the poor and to relieve all sickness and suffering.

10. To love all men and endeavour to promote the welfare of one's fellowmen.

11. To fix one's heart on divine and heavenly things and be not given to worldliness.

12. To be active in maintaining unity and harmony in the community.

There could be no higher ideals than those set forth in the *Nava Samhita*. Throughout the lesson of it is that true labour in any field of life is the one and only true worship. Yet even in drawing up these broad rules of life and conduct Keshub was anxious that they themselves should not become a cause of contention, leading to fresh dissensions over their interpretation. 'Let not the

Samhita be a new fetish' he wrote. 'It is no infallible Gospel. It is only the national law of the Aryans of the new Faith in its application to social life. It contains the essence of God's moral law adapted to the peculiar needs and character of reformed Hinduism and based upon their national instinct and traditions. We should not therefore bow to its letter but accept its spirit and its essence for our guidance.'

Adjoining his house in Upper Circular Road he built the new Sanctuary, the Nava Devalaya, and the consecration ceremony on January the 1st 1884 to which he was carried from his sickbed, was his final effort. He died seven days later in the midst of his sorrowing family and friends, sustained during the great physical agony of his last days by their love and veneration. The funeral procession that followed his body to the grave was one of the most imposing that Calcutta had ever seen, and it was especially remarkable for the presence of all classes and all creeds, Europeans Hindus and Muhammadans mingling with his followers of the new faith. Condolences poured in from all quarters, from Her Majesty the Queen-Empress and a host of English friends down to the humblest who had known and appreciated the great man's worth. However much men might differ from him on many points, there were few who did not recognise his earnestness and sincerity.

His all-absorbing desire to benefit his fellow countrymen, and his constant efforts to make his new faith unsectarian and such that it might include the whole brotherhood of man, won universal admiration and respect. In an age of self seeking, he set a striking example of unselfishness. He voluntarily gave up all to follow the way of life that seemed to him to lead to the highest and the best. Worldly rewards he never sought and worldly honours he refused. His way of life, it is true, though an ideal to which every Faith might well strive to attain, was an ideal which men in the nineteenth century found it hard to follow. It needed the enthusiasm and devotion of the earlier ages when the world was young and life less complex. It was in direct contrast to the growing worldliness and the keen competitive spirit of the day against which it was a protest. The whole tendency of the time was in the opposite direction. The decay of the old faiths had coincided with the great renaissance of thought and education and but for the little company of enthusiasts whom that renaissance produced, it might have ended in a cataclysm of irreligion. How great was the influence of Keshub Chandra Sen and how effectual were his efforts towards checking the prevailing tendency towards unbelief and immorality must not be judged merely by the numerical strength of the Samaj that he founded. His influence went far deeper and his noble

life and character left an abiding impression on the thought and spirit of the day. Among the many distinguished Indians of the century there was none whose name was more widely known in Europe and throughout the East, and none who exercised a greater influence in stemming the tide of irreligion and immorality, and awakening his fellow-countrymen to a sense of their moral, social, and intellectual responsibilities.

Nawab Sir Khawja Abdul Ghani Mia

NAWAB SIR KHAWJA ABDUL GHANI MIA, K.C.S.I.

1830—1896.

Throughout the nineteenth century there was no name more revered in Eastern Bengal than that of Nawab Abdul Ghani. For over fifty years he was the leading Muhammadan in Dacca and the eastern provinces, occupying a unique position there among Europeans and his own fellow countrymen alike. From a position of comparative insignificance he raised himself and his family to one of commanding eminence, eliciting universal admiration and respect. Loyal, generous and public-spirited he won the affection of all who came in contact with him.

The original founder of the family was one Moulvi Abdulla who in the time of the Emperor Muhammad Shah came to India from Cashmir, seeking his fortunes like many another in his day at the Imperial Court of Delhi. On the fall of the Moghul Empire, when the Imperial court ceased to afford opportunities for fortune building, Moulvi Abdulla set out for the eastern provinces on the outskirts of the Empire, where all things were still possible to the adventurer. Finally reaching Sylhet he set

up for himself as a merchant there, his wide knowledge of the world and of men enabling him to meet with immediate success. Sending for his father and brother from Cashmir, he succeeded in establishing a prosperous business, his house and godown occupying the site of the present Collectorate offices. After his death his son and successor moved to Dacca which offered a wider and more convenient field of operations, settling in the quarter known as Begum's Bazaar. It was a time of upheaval. The old order was changing and the old families who had long held the neighbouring Zemindaries were dying out or, encumbered with debt, were being forced to relinquish their possessions. For the new man with brains, energy and capital there was a chance such as seldom offered. Zemindary after Zemindary was bought up often at a nominal price and so successful did the enterprises of the descendants of Moulvi Abdulla prove that the trading from which their prosperity had originally taken its rise was gradually abandoned. A generation before Abdul Ghani the family had won for itself an acknowledged place among the more important Zemindars of the Dacca district.

It was not, however, until the time of Khawja Alimulla, father of Abdul Ghani, that the family became known outside merely local limits. He was one of the best types of the rising man of that generation. Endowed with great business capacity

and strong common sense he was quick to seize the golden opportunities that opened up before him. The time of change and unrest was drawing to its close. Already the old order had well nigh passed away, the old authority and the old line of rulers gradually disappearing from sheer exhaustion and inanition. The last of the old Nawabs of Dacca, Ghaziuddin Mahomed, known as the Pagla Nawab on account of his eccentricity, was as typical of the passing order of things as Khawja Alimulla was of the rising generation. Well nigh all the old families were sharing the fate of the Nawabs, coming to an end in weak, feeble specimens of humanity, sunk deep in debt and vice. Their degradation and helplessness were the opportunity of such men as Khawja Alimulla. Gradually as the embarrassed owners were forced to sell in order to pay their debts, he added to his already extensive estates, purchasing Zemindaries not only in the Dacca district but further afield in Chittagong, Barisal, Faridpur, Mymensingh and Tipperah. Everything that he touched prospered. Not the least striking instance of his business ability was his purchase of the famous diamond, the Dariya-i-Nur for only 60,000 Rs. It is now worth several lacs.

From the first he had courted the society of Europeans, realising what few of his co-religionists had then done that if the Muhammadan community was to advance with the times and share in the general

prosperity that was coming to Bengal it must cast aside the old exclusiveness and aloofness from affairs. While remaining strictly orthodox he mixed freely with the Europeans of the station, making many friends both among officials and non-officials. Few Muhammadans of the day knew English and though he himself never acquired a perfect grasp of the language he was careful to see that the son whom he destined to succeed him acquired a complete knowledge of it. From his earliest years Khawja Alimulla had seen in his favourite son Abdul Ghani all the traits of character that he held necessary in his successor. The vast properties that he had accumulated needed a good business head to manage them, a man of the world with experience of men and affairs. Very carefully Khawja Alimulla watched over the training of his son, and to his father Abdul Ghani often in after years acknowledged that he owed a very large share of his success in life.

Born in 1830 Abdul Ghani Mia succeeded his father on the latter's death in 1848. It was a splendid inheritance that fell to him, and there belongs to him the credit of handing it on in his turn to his son, not diminished but enormously increased in value. Above all he administered his estates not solely with an eye to his own benefit but always with the very real and keen desire to contribute to the happiness and prosperity of all

those in any way connected with them. Strictly following the admirable example set by his father and adhering loyally to the principles laid down by him for the conduct of business, he consolidated and greatly improved the property. A young man of charming address and manners he was as popular with Europeans as with his fellow countrymen. A model husband and father, he was equally successful in preventing friction in the family circle. The head of a large family he was continually called upon to arbitrate in petty family disputes and these he never failed to settle with tact and patience, giving satisfaction to all parties who, even if the decision went against them, were convinced of his wisdom and impartiality. Blessed with robust health, he was fond of sport and of all manly games. As a shot he excelled, while at pigsticking to which he was devoted he was more than a match for many of his European friends. Keenly appreciating music and poetry, he was a liberal patron of the acts and everything that tended to the spread of modern education among the Muhammadan community received his warm support.

The events of 1857 gave Abdul Ghani a striking opportunity of proving his loyalty to the British Government. When the first rumours of mutiny reached Dacca there were only two companies of the 73rd Native Infantry, numbering some ten hundred and sixty men, with artillery stationed in

the city at the time. These were known to be disaffected and excited by rumours that daily reached Dacca of the excesses committed by the sepoys elsewhere. Abdul Ghani threw the whole weight of his influence on the side of law and order, and though threatened with robbery and personal violence for so doing by certain evil characters who were endeavouring to raise the sepoys to revolt, he remained firm. His friends urged him to leave the station, knowing that in consequence of his loyal conduct he would be the first to suffer in case the mutiny came to a head. So far however from running away Abdul Ghani actively associated himself with the officials, placing at their disposal all his vast resources and assisting in disarming the sepoys on November 22nd, 1857. His splendid courage and example did much to allay the panic and keep loyal many who would otherwise have wavered. He further showed his confidence in the British Government by subscribing largely to the government loan which was opened about this time.

In his Zemindari work he was assisted by European and Eurasian as well as by Indian managers. From all alike he won willing and loyal service. It has been said that it is one of the greatest attributes of a great man that he should be able to surround himself with capable and devoted servants and this power Abdul Ghani certainly possessed in full measure. Though courteous and

considerate to all, there was never a moment's doubt that his was the directing and controlling mind. He had the whole of his vast business operations completely within his grasp, no matter being too small for his personal attention. It was only thus, as he himself was wont to say, that a great Zemindari could be worked with complete success.

In spite of his great wealth Abdul Ghani conducted his life with great simplicity. He habitually rose early, either riding out, hunting or shooting, busying himself in his garden or taking long walks in the cool morning air. On his return it was his custom to repair to his Charkhana where between 7 and 8 A.M. he took tea holding a kind of informal reception that included not only the male members of his family and his friends, but all those who wished to see him as well as those who came to partake of his charity. Many old and invalid Muhammadans, who had seen better days, were always to be found at this early morning levee which was a strangely assorted gathering where all were welcome whether in rags or gorgeously attired. It was a kind and considerate way of bestowing charity upon those who needed it, for the early morning cup of tea of the nawab himself always meant in their case a substantial breakfast. Abdul Ghani moved freely among his guests listening to their grievances, tendering his advice and settling their disputes in truly patriarchal manner. At nine o'clock he used

to retire to his private apartments where he remained occupied with his own private affairs until breakfast, which he took in company with all the chief members of his family, was served. From eleven till two o'clock he devoted himself to his wife and children in the seclusion of the Zenana, attending to their needs, instructing them and conversing with them on family matters. At two o'clock he usually went to his office room in the Ahsan Manzil where the chief business of the day claimed his attention. Exercising so close a control over all the affairs of his vast Zemindari, the business that he had daily to transact was no light task. His work, moreover, was by no means confined to his own affairs. He was always accessible during these hours to any of his friends or tenants who wished to see him, and so great was his reputation as an arbitrator, owing to his tact and knowledge of the world, that there were always many who preferred to bring their disputes to him for decision rather than to take them to the Law Courts. His business for the day over, he usually rode or drove late in the afternoon, returning in time for the evening meal. From eight till ten o'clock he sat with his friends and relatives, listening to music or discoursing on current topics. Such was the daily routine of Abdul Ghani carried out with almost unvarying consistency for nearly forty years. Extremely conservative as to his personal habits and loyal to his old friends, he desired no change.

The charities of the Nawab, both public and private were on a most generous scale. He spent large sums on sacred shrines in and around Dacca, and although himself a staunch Sunni, he did not hesitate to maintain at great expense the largest Imambara in Dacca which is entirely a Shia institution. This is but one instance of his wide sympathies and liberal-mindedness. So great was his influence with both Sunnis and Shias that when a serious difference occureed between them, threatening to lead to open mutiny, he was asked by the local authorities to arbitrate between them. This he did with such success that their differences were speedily healed. For those respectable Muhammadans who had fallen on evil days and of whom Dacca, an old city which had itself suffered decay, held a large number, he evinced a special sympathy. His private benefactions to such as these will never be known.

In Dacca and throughout his extensive estates he was universally beloved. No tale of distress or scarcity coming from any part of Eastern Bengal ever met with an unsympathetic reception from him. When famine or cyclone had done their worst he was always prompt to relieve distress by every generous means in his power. Of the wealth that had come to him in such abundance he gave with no stinting hand. Dacca in particular owed much to him. In addition to the fine gardens and houses

which he freely opened to the public, the greatest service that he rendered to the town was the construction of water works at a cost of two and a half lacs. Intended as a thank offering for the recovery of the Prince of Wales from his severe illness in 1871, the foundation stone was laid by the Viceroy Lord Northbrook in 1874. They were finally opened for use by the Commissioner of the Division in 1878. In planning such works of improvement as this and in the daily routine of his life in Dacca he was content: To live among his own people, doing his duty by all those whose fortunes were so largely committed to his charge, was all he desired. No man could have sought honours less than Nawab Abdul Ghani, yet honours necessarily came to him in full measure. Beginning early as an Honorary Magistrate he was appointed a member of the Bengal Legislative Council in 1866. In the following year he was made an additional member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council. From that time onward honours fell thick upon him. Created a Companion of the Order of the Star of India in 1871 he was specially presented to the Prince of Wales by Lord Northbrook and awarded a medal in 1874. A year later he was given the title of Nawab as a personal distinction, an honour which was made hereditary two years later on the occasion of the Proclamation of the Queen Empress. In 1886 he was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India.

For many years before his death he had given over the management of his estates to his eldest son, known later as the Nawab Sir Khawja Ashanulla, whom he had carefully trained as his successor and who so worthily followed in his father's footsteps. In 1896 Nawab Abdul Ghani died, full of years and honour, loved and respected by all who knew him. Throughout his long life he had been consistently loyal both to the British Government and to the interests of his own community. A keen business man, he never aggrandised himself at the expense of others. His sympathies were wide and generous and no deserving case was ever brought to his notice in vain. He was one of the best types of Zemindars that Bengal has produced, content to live in the midst of his own people and with an ear always open to their petitions and complaints. His will always remain one of the greatest and grandest figures in Eastern Bengal in the nineteenth century.

Maharaja Durga Charan Law

MAHARAJA DURGA CHARAN LAW C.I.E.

1822—1902.

Among Indian merchant princes in Bengal the name of Maharaja Durga Charan Law takes high rank. The firm started by his father was one of the first Indian firms to conduct business on English lines, and its wonderful success from its first small beginnings is one of the most typical signs of the awakening of Bengal in the nineteenth century.

The ancestors of the Law family lived, at the earliest period of which definite knowledge of them is obtainable, at Barsul, now a small village in the District of Burdwan. In those days it was a place of considerable importance, containing the residences of several wealthy families who only deserted it on account of the inroads of the Mahrattas during the early years of the eighteenth century. Rajib Lachan Law, the grandfather of the Maharaja, left the village for this reason, and came to reside at Chinsura which was then a Dutch settlement. How long the family continued to reside here and when the firm of Prawn Kissen Law was first established in Calcutta cannot now be definitely ascertained. It must, however, have been early in the nineteenth

century, since the firm had already obtained prominence by the time that the future Maharaja first joined it as an assistant in 1839. Durga Charan was the eldest son of Prawn Kissen Law, the original founder of the firm which is still after nearly a century known by his name. Prawn Kissen was one of the pioneers of the Indian commercial world. Almost all the European Companies which had found their way to India had come in the first instance solely in pursuit of trade and during their first years of commercial activity no Indian firm had ventured to compete with them on their own lines. But as the English gradually emerged triumphantly from the long struggle of the eighteenth century and trade was ceasing to be the first object of the Company, more open conditions prevailed, and it became possible for Indian firms to enter into competition with the English merchants by adopting their methods and standards of business. The Indian community, however, was at first slow to take advantage of the opportunity and to Prawn Kissen Law belongs the credit of being among the first to see the great possibilities that were opening out before his fellow countrymen in the way of trade and commerce under the new reign of peace, order and security. His firm, one of the first to compete seriously with European firms was also one of the most successful, placing him and his descendants among the front rank of Indian merchant princes.

Durga Charan Law was born on the 23rd of November, 1822 at Chinsura. Receiving his early training at the Hindu College, which started in 1817, through the exertions of David Hare, Ram Mohan Roy and others, was then the principal college in Bengal. From the first he was destined by his father to succeed him as head of the firm which he had founded and which already gave promise of its ultimate remarkable success. Leaving college while still in his seventeenth year Durga Charan was at once inducted into his father's office to be initiated into mercantile affairs. With true wisdom, Prawn Kissen insisted that his son should begin at the lowest rung of the ladder as an assistant, learning every detail of the business and working his way up through the various offices until he was fitted by experience to take the lead. Durga Charan at once exhibited business capacities that delighted his father's heart and promised well for the future of the firm which was yearly growing in importance. Rapidly mastering the routine of the office, he showed the greatest application and an eager desire to acquire a sound knowledge of business principles, and to such effect did he apply himself that on his father's death in 1853, he was fully competent to undertake the entire management of the firm. With him in the business were associated his two younger brothers Sham Charan Law and Joy Govind Law, and with their help during the years that followed

he succeeded in greatly extending the operations of the firm. Its transactions were on an immense scale. In almost all kinds of imports it had dealings, huge quantities of piece goods, yarns, prints, umbrellas, woollen goods, iron, copper, corrugated iron sheets, paints, asphalts and cements passing through its hands every year. Among its exports were, wheat, cotton, tea, indigo, hides, musk, sugar, molasses, linseed and poppy seed, with occasional shipments of opium to Hongkong. The firm had agents in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow while in Calcutta it acted as banian to no fewer than ten European firms. Such was the enormous business over which Durga Charan Law exercised for nearly half a century personal and complete control. From the outset of his career Durga Charan had shown not only industry and business capacity but a high sense of commercial integrity and honour. It was this reputation which the firm early acquired that enabled it to win the respect and inspire the confidence of the Indian and European communities alike. As its head and as the moving spirit that directed its policy and its great undertakings, Durga Charan Law came rapidly into prominence in Calcutta life. He was consulted by all classes, not only on commercial matters, but, so great were his interests, on all the social and political questions of the day. Government was not slow to recognise his ability and his usefulness in the public service. He was the first Indian to be

appointed a Port Commissioner of Calcutta, and the many other honours and distinctions of all kinds that came to him in rapid succession showed the esteem in which he was held by all classes of the community. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the town of Calcutta and an Honorary Presidency Magistrate early in his career, while later came the honour of nomination to the Bengal Legislative Council. He was also elected a member of the Senate of the Calcutta University and held office as Sheriff of Calcutta, being appointed a member of the Supreme Legislative Council in 1882. In the same year he sat on the Commission appointed for the reduction of the Public Debt while two years later came the first titular honour, that of the Companionship of the Order of the Indian Empire, conferred upon him by Government in recognition of the services he had rendered. On the occasion of the Jubilee of the Queen-Empress the title of Raja was bestowed upon him. In the following year he was again appointed a member of the Supreme Legislative Council and in 1891 he was created a Maharaja. These high honours and offices show not only in what high esteem Durga Charan Law was held but the varied interests and activities which he contrived to combine with the management of a large and successful business.

His charities were unbounded. Possessed of immense wealth he was always ready to place it at

the disposal of every good cause. In support of education and in the relief of suffering his purse was always open. To the Calcutta University he gave the handsome donation of fifty thousand rupees to form a fund for the creation of scholarships in various schools and colleges throughout Bengal. To the District Charitable Association and the Suvarna Banik Charitable Association of which he was President, his subscriptions at various times amounted to large sums. He was a Governor of the Mayo Hospital to which he also largely contributed, one of the Wards being named after him in memory of his liberal endowments. His private charities were very numerous, a large number of schools and hospitals throughout his extensive estates being entirely maintained by him. In Calcutta he took a prominent part in all the great charitable and philanthropic movements of the day, no scheme of public utility failing to receive his hearty sympathy and financial support.

The Maharaja was one of the largest landholders in Bengal. He possessed estates in several districts and in all of them he proved a model landlord, firm and businesslike and heartily solicitious of the welfare of his tenants. Many of his estates he personally acquired at auction and saved from ruin, placing them by capable management on a sound and stable basis. The history of some of these estates furnishes a romantic record of the advancement of civilisation in Bengal. Among those acquired by the Maharaja

none is of greater interest than the estate of Morrelgunj in the Sundarband, that immense tract of river and forest at the head of the Bay of Bengal which so long defied all reclamation. Great efforts had at various times been made to bring it under cultivation. Not only had individuals set forth into the unknown wilds of these immense forest tracks in the hope of reclaiming them and deriving from them wealth and fortune, but Government had itself attempted the Herculean task. Hitherto, however, the difficulties had always proved insuperable. Labour had all to be imported and when at length the labourers had been safely conveyed there at much expense, it had been found difficult to prevail upon them to stay. The land being everywhere lowlying and malarious, fever was prevalent while the loneliness of the life, and the fear of wild animals which constantly carried off the ryots as they cut down the jungle, induced them to escape at the earliest possible moment. So far the Sundarbans had proved nothing but the graves of men and of all their hopes of fortune. None had succeeded in the fight with nature and tamed its rampant luxuriance to any great extent the dull routine of cultivation. But in one corner of the vast area it was reserved for an English family to do, what others had failed to do, and by sheer force of character and energy to clear the splendid estate which was eventually to pass into the hands of Maharaja Durga Charan Law.

The Sundarbans had been divided by Government into lots with a view to reclamation and Lots I, II, III and IV had been settled with one Babu Kalinath Roy of Taki for a period of 99 years, the only stipulation being that he should bring under cultivation a certain portion of the land within a fixed period. In spite of his efforts he had been unable to overcome the initial difficulties of cultivation in the Sundarbans and only 800 bighas had been reclaimed on the expiry of the time allowed. Government therefore issued a fresh notice to resettle the remaining portion of the Lots. An English woman, a widow named Mrs. Morrel, came forward offering to take settlement in the name of her three sons, and in 1857 Government settled the Lots with them for a period of 99 years. The three brothers Robert, who had been a Captain in a British Regiment, William and Henry at once set out from Calcutta to undertake personally the work of cultivation, old Mrs. Morrel in spite of her advanced age accompanying them. Arriving after a seven days' journey in country boats, they fixed upon the most suitable site for their headquarters. There was then nothing but impenetrable forest, and the Morrels and the men they had brought with them, were forced to live in their boats until sufficient space had been cleared whereon to erect temporary shelters. It was a splendid position that they selected where Morelgunj now stands, the anchorage in the broad

river that washes its banks being so commodious that the place was later on declared a port in the hope that the largest steamers might visit it. For themselves the Morrels constructed a fine house with large gardens close by the river bank, while a splendid avenue was opened out parallel with the river, and leading to the bazaar which quickly sprang up with a thriving mart, as the limits of cultivation extended. Within ten years no less than four thousand bighas had been cleared and as rumours of the extraordinary fertility of the newly cleared soil reached the neighbouring districts, hundreds of ryots hastened to the spot and eagerly took up land to clear and cultivate. It was not long before practically the whole of the four lots was reclaimed, a large portion of them by the Morrels themselves, the remainder by Talukdars to whom they had given leases. With the success of his enterprise apparently assured, Robert Morrel took settlement of other adjoining lands from government until his estate reached to the sea and extended over an immense area. Far away from the magisterial headquarters at Khulna, which was then a subdivision of Jessore, and cut off from easy access by a network of rivers and impenetrable jungle, the Morrels were wellnigh independent of outside interference in their control of the large and flourishing tract which they had brought into existence.

How largely the prosperity of Morelgunj was due to the tact and energy of Robert Morrel himself was seen as soon as his presence was withdrawn. His health had been seriously impaired by his great exertions in bringing the estate under cultivation and he finally decided to retire to England, leaving his brothers and an agent in charge of his affairs. Troubles which threatened to undo all the good work he had done speedily occurred after his departure. A dispute arose between his agent and a neighbouring Zemindar which not only brought the former into trouble with the authorities but involved the estate in long and costly litigation in the Courts. More unfortunate still many of the tenants who had been attracted by the fertility of the soil were frightened away by these disputes, which had more than once led to bloodshed. Hearing of these unfortunate occurrences Robert Morrel, in spite of ill health, returned to Morelgunj. There he found that affairs had indeed been going badly in his absence. Many of the tenants had abandoned their holdings and much of the land which he had brought under cultivation was lying fallow, and in places rapidly falling back again into jungle. With characteristic energy he set to work to regain lost ground and to put things once more upon a satisfactory footing, but in the midst of his labours he died at Barisal on the 13th of May, 1869. An obelisk erected at Morrelgunj by his tenants

testifies how great was the affection and respect that he inspired. After his death the estate soon became insolvent and his brother was forced to mortgage Lots I, II, III to Maharaja Durga Charan Law who quickly saw the great possibilities the estate offered if judiciously and economically managed. Here was an immense tract of fertile land already under cultivation with all the initial difficulties of labour and reclamation overcome. The Morrels, carried away by the initial success of their enterprise, had launched out into many unnecessary extravagances and the Maharaja with his keen business instinct only awaited the opportunity of getting possession of the estate to reduce it to order and make of it a splendid property. Unable to satisfy his creditors, William, the last survivor of the three brothers, was finally forced to sell the whole estate in 1878 and in the following year Durga Charan Law purchased all four Lots. Under his management Morrelgunj soon entered upon another period of prosperity. Under a capable manager he introduced order and control, greatly developing the properties, making roads, excavating tanks, cutting canals, establishing hâts, building schools and establishing a charitable Dispensary. Practically everything in Morrelgunj is still done by the Maharaja's sons. The Dispensary and the schools are still maintained entirely at their expense, while their tenants look to them for almost all their needs. It possesses a thriving

hât, and though cut off by land from other parts of the District by a network of rivers, it is on the main steamer route from Calcutta to Eastern Bengal and Assam. It was fortunate for Morrelgunj that it fell into the hands of so just and capable a Zemindar as Maharaja Durga Charan Law.

For some years before his death, failing health prevented the Maharaja from taking his accustomed active part in public affairs. He never, however, lost his keen interest in all the current questions of the day and to the end he was consulted and his opinion sought on a variety of subjects by all classes of the community. A man of few words, he was never hasty in giving his opinion, but once given that opinion seldom proved wrong. His judgment consequently met with universal respect. He had a horror of falsehood or deceit in any shape or form, and in the mercantile world his name was always synonymous with honesty and straightforward dealing. Though the strictness of his principles gave him a somewhat severe mein, those who knew him were quick to realise that under a harsh exterior he had a heart of gold. The Maharaja died at the great age of eighty years in 1902, one of the wealthiest and most respected merchant princes of Bengal.

Nawab Bahadur Syed Walayet Ali Khan

NAWAB BAHADUR SYED WALAYET ALI KHAN, C.I.E.

1818—1899.

Loyal in the dark days of mutiny, a generous helper in times of famine and distress, and an eager promoter of learning, Syed Walayet Ali Khan has left a memory that is still alive far beyond the limits of his native city. Throughout his long life of over fourscore years he was universally beloved as one of the leaders of the Muhammadan community in Patna and Behar. The story of his life is one of consistent rectitude, steadfast loyalty and high endeavour.

It was at Patna on the 23rd of September, 1818 that the future Nawab Bahadur first saw the light. He came of a Syed family of considerable local importance, claiming descent from Imam Ali Reza, the 8th Imam. His father Syed Mehdi Ali Khan was himself the son of Syed Abdulla Sahib, who was a rich banker of Patna and who like many another had found his way from the north-west towards the close of the Moghul empire, seeking fresh fields for enterprise in Bengal. His original home had been at Karamanikpur in Oudh and his ancestors had held honourable posts at the Moghal Court. Coming to Patna with a considerable sum of money, he

settled there, acquiring large landed properties and carrying on a banking business with eminent success. It was on the maternal side, however, that the Nawab could claim his most distinguished descent. His father had married the Nawaba Hafizun-nissa Begum who herself was the great grand-daughter of Nawab Basher-ul-Mulk Asad Jung, for many years Deputy Governor of Behar in the time of the Emperor Shah Alum. The latter had four sons of whom the most distinguished was Nawab Syed Gholam Hosein Khan, the well known author of the famous history of the Moghul Court, the "Seir-ul-Mutakerin" which throws so strong a light on the causes of the decay of the Mohgul Empire during the reigns of the last seven monarchs. The second son of Nawab Basher-ul-Mulk was Syed-ud-dowlah Syed Ali Khan Shumser Jung, the grandfather of Hafizun-nissa Begum. The third son was Fakir-ud-dowlah Syed Najim Ali Khan Zafar Jung on whom the Pergana Japla in the district of Palamau was conferred as a revenue free gift in recognition of his services to the Moghul Empire, a grant which was confirmed by the East India Company on the 5th August, 1815, three years before the birth of the subject of this memoir. Having no son, Fakir-ud-dowlah had adopted his brother's grand-daughter, Hafizun-nissa Begum who thus acquired by adoption a share in the property. Nawab Syed Walayet Ali Khan thus came of stock which had done good

service to the state and which in so doing had acquired considerable wealth and position.

Of the early years of the Nawab but little is recorded. He was brought up under the immediate suprevision of his grandfather Syed Abdullah, and so well did he profit by the old man's teaching that at the early age of eighteen he was placed in charge of the family property in Tirhoot. Thrown largely upon his own resources there, he quickly proved himself worthy of the trust that had been placed in him. Turning a deaf ear to all the temptations of youth he set himself diligently to master business methods and all the work of an extensive Zemindari with such success that he had the satisfaction of seeing the property enormously increase in value under his personal supervision and management. From the first he was distinguished by his remarkable tact and winning manners, and it was not long before he began to take an active interest in public affairs beyond the limits of his own Zemindari. Although unable to speak English, he early in life won the esteem of European officials, who recognised in him one of the best types of the Muhammadan gentleman of the old school. While remaining strictly orthodox he was eager to accept western ideas where they tended to the greater well-being and prosperity of his countrymen. Of western methods in medical science and hygiene he was quick to see the advantage. The old saying that

cleanliness is next to godliness had in him a firm believer and in season and out of season he preached greater cleanliness and better sanitation as one of the chief needs of the day.

It was in the dark days of the mutiny that Syed Walayet Ali Khan first came prominently forward and won golden opinions from government for his loyalty and practical assistance. Patna, the second city in Bengal, was looked upon at that time as the centre of disloyalty. A large number of Muhammadans there hankered after the old regime, refusing that strong support and loyalty to the British Government which they have since accorded. Syed Walayet Ali Khan's loyalty thus stands out all the more conspicuously, as being one of the first to see in what direction the true interests of his co-religionists and fellowcountrymen lay. From the first he followed his own convictions without thought of fear or favour. "With regard to Walayet Ali Khan," wrote the Commissioner of Patna at the time of the Mutiny, "the following extracts from one of my official reports will show the opinions I held regarding his loyalty and the valuable assistance I had received from him during the most critical period of danger."—

"It is also gratifying to me to be able at this time to record the assistance I have received from several of the respectable native residents of Patna, more especially from among others, Walayet Ali

Khan has been conspicuous from the very commencement of the disturbance; and the bravery and frankness with which he has, at a very great risk to himself, cast his lot on the side of the authorities, is deserving of special recognition at the present time, and has been in itself of great use."

"A few days after the news of the Mutiny reached us, he presented to me a petition, stating that he was ready to devote life and property to the service of the state, and from that day he has incessantly exerted himself in the cause of Government, seeking for information, ferreting out bad characters, watching the city and obtaining good information through emissaries employed at his expense from the neighbouring villages. Walayet Ali Khan has accordingly taken possession of an English house at the west end of the city near my compound and began living there day and night at a considerable scale of sacrifice to his life."

It was not only in time of emergency, however, that he showed his loyalty to the crown and his earnest desire to serve his country. At a time when Muhammadan influence and education were at their lowest ebb, he came to the front as a leader in every movement of social progress in Behar. There was no public spirited enterprise of any kind from this time forward with which his name was not associated. Of the Patna College, which now occupies so prominent a place among educational

institutions in Behar he was one of the chief promoters. The Temple Medical School, named after the Lieutenant-Governor of the day and the Behar School of Engineering also met with his generous support. These, however, are but a few and the best known instances of his generosity and the encouragement he gave to all works of public utility. There are innumerable unrecorded gifts to schools and colleges, hospitals and dispensaries, clubs, societies, mosques and public buildings, to all of which he liberally subscribed. Those donations that have been recorded form a long list and it was typical of the large-heartedness and public spiritedness of the man that his charities were not confined to his own country and his own co-religionists. He was ready to subscribe as generously to relieve distress abroad as in Behar.

During the famine of 1874, he took a prominent part in relieving the distress, contributing no less than a lac of rupees to the relief funds and himself taking an active part in their distribution. In 1874, Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy of India, paid a visit to Behar and, granting Syed Walayet Ali Khan a private audience, he consulted him in a long conversation concerning the condition of Behar. In the cold weather of 1875-6 His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales paid his memorable visit to India, and among those invited to Calcutta to meet him was Syed Walayet Ali Khan, who took part in

all the festivities of welcome as one of the leading men of Behar. Immediately afterwards he returned to Patna to receive His Royal Highness there also, being one of the few privately presented to the Prince during his visit. His Royal Highness received him most graciously, eulogising him for his past services and especially for his courage and loyalty during the Mutiny. A year later a certificate of honour was presented to him on the auspicious occasion of the assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress of India.

On the 1st of January, 1878 came further recognition. The Companionship of the most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire was conferred upon him on account of his prominent and devoted services rendered during the Mutiny and of his munificent liberality. His investiture took place at a Durbar held by the Commissioner of the Division at Sonepur on the 13th of March, 1878. In presenting to him the insignia of the order, the Commissioner paid this glowing tribute to his services—

"Syed Walayet Ali Khan, you have always been a most devoted and loyal subject of Government. During the Mutiny you have eminently distinguished yourself by displaying remarkable and inflexible loyalty. Your services during that crisis were invaluable.....Professions of loyalty are valuable in proportion as they are voluntary and timely and their sincerity is tested by acts. The proffer of

Walayet Ali Khan's services was made in our darkest and most dangerous crisis and the proffer throughout was supported by deeds.

"This character has ever since been laudably maintained by you.

"You have also been conspicuous in your liberality and public spiritedness, having hitherto contributed no less than Rs. 70,000 towards charitable and public Institutions. During the late famine you exhibited marked generosity, having unostentatiously spent about 40,000 Rs. or 50,000 Rs. in relieving the distressed people. Your services have now received the recognition of Her Majèsty the Queen-Empress of India and it gives me great pleasure to be the medium of conveying to you the token of royal favour and I sincerely hope that you may long enjoy the honour thus graciously conferred on you."

Only four years later he received the title of Nawab as a personal distinction. A special Durbar was held at Bankipur on the 11th of November, 1882 by the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Rivers Thompson in order to invest him with the insignia of the new title. His Honour in handing him the Sanad spoke as follows—

"Syed Walayet Ali Khan—It is at the instance of His Excellency the Viceroy that I am present here to-day to confer upon you in this public Durbar the title and dignity of Nawab. In any career of

life, apart from the testimony of a good conscience, that a man has striven honourably to do his duty, the highest reward which one can secure is the esteem and approbation of one's fellowcountrymen. I believe that element of contemporary approval is not wanting in your own position : but it is quite fitting that where an eminent citizen has used unostentatiously and disinterestedly the wealth his hands have gained him, to advance the public good, government should not be backward in recognising such efforts. This is not the first occasion upon which it has fallen to your lot to receive at the hands of official authority the approval which government desires to express to a loyal and liberal subject. I note that, on the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty's assumption of the title of Empress of India, among the natives who were selected for marks of distinction, you were one of those who received a Certificate of Honour. I note that at a more recent period you were enrolled as a companion of the Order of the Indian Empire, and now it devolves upon me, both as a pleasure and privilege to confer upon you to-day the rank and title of Nawab. We may be sure that they could be no light services for which such accumulated honours were reserved, and speaking in the presence of those who know you best, I indulge in neither extravagance nor flattery when I say that in view of the prominent and devoted services rendered by you during the

Mutiny and your munificent liberalities for the good of your people and district, the bestowal of such titular distinctions as these brings honour alike to the government and to yourself. You stand forward in this city as an example of loyal patriotism, you have shown in cases of danger and difficulty the reality and sincerity of that patriotism, and in times of peace and order you have proved that the responsibilities of wealth and lofty position have been rightly appreciated by you in the co-operation you have given to the advancement of every useful and good work. I congratulate you therefore in the presence of this large and distinguished audience upon your accession to a dignity so well merited: and I wish you sincerely many years of health and future usefulness in the enjoyment of the honour which the Viceroy of India has confered upon you."

On the occasion of his receiving the title of Nawab, his fellowcountrymen of Patna both Hindu and Muhammadan presented him with an address on the 17th of April, 1883 which forms a splendid tribute from those amongst whom he had lived and worked. It ran—

"We, the undersigned residents of Patna, in presenting this address to you only give expression to the sincere feeling of pleasure and satisfaction which we experience in seeing you deservedly honored. The benevolence which has distinguished your career has elicited from Government its due recogni-

tion in the shape of honors conferred, and this, while it serves to perpetuate the memory of that benevolence, furnishes a strong and lasting incentive to others to follow your philanthropic example.

"Believe us, you are as thoroughly esteemed as you are widely known, both for your moral worth and your kindly disposition, and your name is known to fame even in the more distant parts of the world.

"In the dreadful Mutiny of 1857 you consistently and firmly displayed to a just and watchful Government the pleasing spectacle of a subject unhesitatingly honest when his conscientious dissent was based upon personal experiences and peculiar means of knowledge, and throughout all, disinterestedly loyal, regardless of the extreme personal risk involved ; and it was for this right loyal service at a most critical time, that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales personally thanked you, for it was admittedly owing in a great measure to your cool vigilance, wise moderation and unswerving loyalty that Patna owed its escape from overwhelming disaster. Nor have matters of great individual, and social, if of less general political importance, escaped your notice ; and notably in the cause of education has your liberal hand been at work, so long back as the year 1856 when you made over to the Government a large estate for the establishment and support of an Industrial and Agricultural School, a scheme which we regret has not yet been carried into completion, and again

in 1862 you were first to give a large donation for the purpose of assisting the establishment of the Patna College, an institution that has steadily progressed, and whose sphere of useful influence it is hard to overestimate, and which can be compared only as to the good it has done with the Temple Medical School, with which also you are identified by the large donation given by you at its institution in 1874. These contributions, the spirit that promoted them, and the universal good that has resulted from them, are the results on which is based the gratitude of the people of Patna of whatever creed, sects, caste or class. Again in connection with the late famines in India and in Ireland (your contribution aggregating the sum of Rs. 1,20,000) your subscription to the fund for the relief and support of the wives and children of the soldiers who fell in the Afghan Campaign, your gifts to the Zoological Garden at Calcutta and the the Mangles Tolah in this city, all witness how wide and how generous were your sympathies, how liberal and how universal your philanthropy.

"In the discharge of your duties as a Municipal Commissioner and as a member of different other societies connected with the social and moral improvement of the people of this city, you have shown us how private and selfish individual prejudices must be made to yield to a sense of what is most conducive to the public good.

"In presenting this address, allow us to express the hope that you will continue to take the keen interest you have hitherto done in the welfare of this city and its inhabitants, and we sincerely trust that the Almighty may prolong a life conspicuous for its energy in the cause of good and its activity in the cause of liberality and philanthroppy."

The Nawab replied as follows :—

"GENTLEMEN,—To-day my dearly beloved Hindu and Muhammadan fellow-citizens (whom I affectionately greet) have made me feel both very happy and very proud ; happy that you approve of what I have done, in the belief that I was doing right, and proud in that I have gained your esteem and your regard. Believe me, I am keenly and deeply sensible of the honour you have now conferred on me by the address you have just presented to me, and that the pleasing memory of it will remain in my recollection as long as it shall seem fit to the Almighty to spare me. You estimate too highly the poor services that I have been able to render, and I attribute the high praise that you are pleased to accord to them rather to the liberality of the Government in marking their sense of them and to the kindly sentiments you entertain towards me, than to the inherent value of the services themselves. With particular reference to what I have been enabled to do on the occasions of public calamity and disturbance, and in the cause of

forwarding our social and moral progress, I regard it in the one case as my duty, and in the other as the expenditure of a little Capital to secure a great amount of good (as we say in the vernacular 'a little word in a big mouth'). Gentlemen, do not be offended if I say that the money which has been spent in connection with the presentation of this address might have been productive of some infinite good if wisely employed in some public works. But I will not deny that you have this day made me very happy, while you have nevertheless accorded to my services a higher merit than they deserve. May you all be spared to enjoy every honour, reward and prosperity that I sincerely wish you, and may I be spared to witness such a consummation of a life acceptable to man and pleasing in the sight of God. Again, gentlemen, I heartily thank you."

The very great popularity of the Nawab among officials and non-officials, among Hindus and Muhammedans alike was evidenced by the number of congratulatory letters that poured in upon him on the occasion of each new honour. Officials without exception placed entire confidence in him and freely consulted him upon all matters relating to Behar and the Muhammedan community. Sir Ashley Eden, as Lieutenant-Governor, honoured him on several occasions by asking his opinion and on his visit to Patna in 1880 finding that he was too ill to pay his

respects to him, he paid him the compliment of calling upon him to enquire after his health. On two other occasions he had the rare honour of receiving a visit from a Lieutenant-Governor at his own house. In 1889 he received a visit from Sir Stuart Bayley, and in 1896, when again seriously ill, he was visited by Sir Alexander Mackenzie. From the highest to the lowest in the land the straightforwardness of his character, his personal disinterestedness and public spirit won universal confidence and esteem.

At a time of life when he might justly have contemplated withdrawal from public duties to enjoy a well-earned leisure, the Nawab was ever ready to incur fresh responsibilities in a good cause. The number of public offices that he held makes a long list. He was for many years an Honorary Magistrate, a Municipal Commissioner, and a member of the District Board as well as of many other local societies connected with the social and moral improvement of the people. He was an active member of the British Indian Association, of the Central Committee of the Imperial Institute in India, a Vice-Patron of the Lady Dufferin Fund, and a life member of the Zoological Gardens and of the Agricultural-Horticultural Society of India at Calcutta. He was also at one time President of the Behar Text-Book Committee. All these offices were to him no mere sinecures. In each he put forward his best efforts, playing a leading part

and endeavouring to make a success of whatever he undertook.

On January 1st 1896 came the final honour to crown his well spent life. He was now seventy-eight years old and the bestowal of the title of Nawab Bahadur came as a fitting close to the long list of honours and distinctions that had been conferred upon him. Once more the heartiest congratulations came from all sides and the Hindu and Muhammadan residents of Patna again presented him with an address expressive of the affection and esteem in which he was universally held.

The Nawab Bahadur lived only three years to enjoy his latest honour. He had lived a long and strenuous life, using his energies both physical and mental to the full in the cause of progress, never sparing himself in his devotion to his Queen and country. The death in January 1899 of his only son Syed Tajamul Hussain Khan, who promised worthily to follow in his father's footsteps was a severe blow from which he never fully recovered. He gradually sank and died five months later on June 3rd, 1899.

Perhaps no funeral has ever so stirred Patna or given occasion for such an outburst of popular feeling as that of the Nawab Bahadur. Had there been any room for doubt as to the esteem and affection in which he was held, the crowds who flocked to do him this last honour would have been sufficient

proof. Among those who followed his remains to the grave were the Commissioner of the Patna Division and the Collector of Patna, both of whom wrote letters of condolence to his grandson in terms that showed the high respect in which they held him. "I have heard with the most profound regret," wrote the Commissioner, "the sad news of the death of your illustrious grandfather, my esteemed friend, this morning , and beg you to accept my most sincere sympathy in this sad event. Your grandfather had been the trusted friend of all the officials for nearly half a century and his death will be a serious loss to Government as well as to the many friends he numbered among the Europeans in this country. The public has lost a trusted and recognised leader. His memory will long survive and it will be difficult for many years to fill his place." The Collector wrote in no less appreciative language. "I have just received with great grief the news of the death of my honoured friend the Nawab Bahadur, your illustrious grandfather. For upwards of seven years that I have known Patna I have been indebted to him for advice and assistance and for a kind and continued friendship, which has been one of the things I have been most proud of in my service. He has gone full of years, wisdom and honour, not long surviving the son to whom he was so deeply attached. It will be many years before his place will be filled and we see the like of

him again. The Muhammadan nobles of Patna have lost a recognised leader and the Government and the cause of law and order a prominent supporter. I beg you to accept the assurance of my deepest sympathy and condolence in your sorrow. The Commissioner and myself will come and join the funeral. We accept this opportunity of showing this last mark of respect ot our departed friend. The offices of the Commissioner and my own have been closed as a mark of respect."

To devise means to commemorate his memory a public meeting aws held in Patna on the 2nd July, 1899. It was presided over by the Commissioner and all the leading men of the neighbourhood were present. It was resolved to raise funds to add a wing to the Muhammadan Anglo-Arabic school to bear his name, and subscriptions were invited for the purpose. They flowed in from all sources, from Europeans and Indians alike, and the building that resulted was a fitting memorial, a tablet perpetuating the memory of him in whose honour it was raised.

It is not, however, in memorials of brick and stone that the memory of the Nawab Bahadur will chiefly live. The influence for good that, throughout his long life which covered nearly the whole of the century, he exercised over the fortunes of his fellowcountrymen is a more enduring monument. In strengthening the loyalty of his coreligionists,

in setting them an example of straightforwardness and rectitude, in promoting every social and educational movement of the day that tended towards the general advancement and prosperity of the people, his chief work lay, and in them lie his claims to be regarded as one of the greatest figures among the Muhammadan community in Bengal in the nineteenth century. At a time when all was change and uncertainty, when the people of Bengal after long years of oppression and unrest had at length time and opportunity for social, moral and educational advancement, the strong and courageous figure of the Nawab Bahadur was a tower of strength to his coreligionists. The Muhammadans of Behar, not yet in the earlier days of the nineteenth century fully reconciled to British supremacy and not yet recovered from the period of decadence into which they had fallen in the last days of the Moghul Empire, were neither in the mood nor had the equipment wherewith to play a leading part in public life. It is to the lasting credit of the Nawab Bahadur that, beginning in their darkest days, he consistently showed them the better way of loyalty and high endeavour. His own success in public life and the honoured position he rose to occupy in the opinion of all who knew him were themselves sufficient proof of the wisdom of his teaching, and might well serve as an example to inspire each one of his coreligionists to follow in his steps.

Maharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore

MAHARAJA SIR JOTINDRA MOHAN TAGORE, K.C.S.I.
1831—1908.

There was no prominent or honoured figure in Indian society in Bengal during the latter half of the nineteenth century than that of Maharaja Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore. An acknowledged leader of the Hindu community, he played a foremost part in all the great movements of the day. For over fifty years, at well nigh every public gathering in Calcutta his tall upright figure and dignified bearing won universal admiration and respect. There was no scheme tending to the improvement of the conditions of his fellowcountrymen physically, mentally or morally that did not meet with his ready sympathy and support. "He combined the polished politeness of the old school with the educational accomplishments of the new," wrote Sir Richard Temple, while Lord Roberts, speaking in the House of Lords, gave it as his firm conviction that "there is no more loyal or enlightened subject in Her Majesty's dominions."

Sir Jotindra came of a family remarkable alike for its long descent and for the high distinctions won by so many of its members. Few other families

in Bengal can show so long and distinguished a record of public usefulness and benevolence. Tracing back its origin to the legendary days of King Adisur, it claims descent from one of the five Brahmin priests whom that king sent for from Kanouj to restore Brahminism in Bengal. From the earliest days of recorded history, the family has held a prominent position, famed for its learning, its wealth and its integrity. Settled for many generations in Jessore, the first to take up his permanent residence on the banks of the Hooghly was Panchanana, who was also the first of his family to receive the title of Thakur, which his descendants in its corrupted form of Tagore have ever since continued to bear. It was in Govindpur, one of the villages destined later to develop into the great city of Calcutta, that Panchanana settled, a choice of domicile that was to prove fortunate for his family in the next generation. Here he first came into close contact with the English and, eager to obtain the advantages that close association with them promised, he secured the appointment of amin of the 24 Perganas for his son Joyram Tagore. It was a responsible and important post in those days, involving the conduction of all the settlement operations in the district as well as the collection of the revenue. The capture of Calcutta by Seraj-ud-dowlah threatened to overwhelm the rising family fortunes, all their possessions being lost during the Mussulman occupation

of the city. With the restoration of the English, however, better days soon dawned again. The site selected by the Company for the new Fort included part of the land which Panchanana had purchased at Gobindpur on his first arrival and whereon he had erected his family house and temple. The Company now purchased the land at a considerably enhanced price from his son Joyram who reaped further profit from his association with the building of the Fort. The new dwelling house and bathing ghat which he built for himself at Pathuria Ghatta still remains in the possessions of his descendants to-day.

Joyram Tagore who may thus be looked upon as the modern founder of the family died in 1762, and since that date his descendants have without a break continued to hold a prominent position in Bengal. His sons Darpa Narain and Nilmoni Tagore early acquired wealth and distinction, the former through successful mercantile enterprises, the latter as sheristadar of the Magistrate's Court at Alipore. Nilmoni Tagore was the grandfather of Dwarkanath Tagore who was so closely associated with Ram Mohan Roy in that great reformer's schemes for the regeneration of Bengal. Dwarkanath's career is one of the romances of the Rennaissance of Bengal. Starting life as a law agent, he carried on at the same time an extensive commercial agency, finally relinquishing both to enter government service and acting for six years as sheristadar to

the Collector of the 24 Parganas. Promoted to be Dewan to the Board of Revenue, he held that post with honour and distinction for many years, retiring from Government service in 1834. Once more drawn towards commercial enterprises, he entered into partnership with Mr. William Carr and Mr. William Prinsep, establishing the firm of Carr Tagore & Co., being one of the first Indian gentlemen to enter into mercantile business in Calcutta on the European model. Associated with others in the establishment of the Union Bank, a leading Zemindar in half a dozen districts, the friend of Ram Mohan Ray and a keen supporter of every scheme of advancement and every institution destined to promote the welfare of the Hindu Community, he was for long one of the most prominent and respected men in Bengal, bringing fresh honour to the name he bore. His grandson Satyendranath Tagore had the distinction of being the first Indian to pass the competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service. Maharaja Ramnath Tagore C.S.I. was the loyal associate of his brother Dwarkanath Tagore in all his enterprises, being connected with almost every public society in Calcutta, literary, scientific and charitable. His whole career was one of public usefulness and benevolence.

From Darpa Narayan, the elder son of Joyram Tagore, from whom Sir Jotindra himself was descended, have sprung others of the name no less worthy

of their great traditions. One of Darpa Narayan Tagore's most successful ventures had been the purchase at auction of part of the immense estates of the Raja of Rajshahi, extending in area to some 249 square miles. His son Gopi Mohan inherited his father's business instincts and added to the splendid estate he inherited by yet further purchases in Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Jessore. His wealth increased so rapidly under his able management that he was regarded as one of the richest men in Bengal, and it was said of him that he never sat down without a lac of rupees beside him, his jewelled *paridan* and hookah alone being worth that sum. He worthily maintained the public-spirited traditions of his family, being a liberal patron of the arts and of all branches of learning. Like so many members of his family he was a learned Sanskrit scholar and devoted to music. One of his six sons was the famous Prasanna Kumar Tagore. Educated at Mr. Sherbourne's well known school in Calcutta and later at the Hindu College, losses in business induced him to get himself enrolled as a Pleader. To a profound knowledge of Law, he united strong common sense and a keen sagacity that quickly secured him the first position at the Bar. By his dignity, ability and character he did much to raise the legal profession in public estimation and so great was his practice that he is said to have made an income of over twenty thousand pounds a year. He played a leading part in founding the

Bengal Landowner's Society in 1838 and was elected President of the British Indian Association on its inauguration in 1857. On the formation of the Legislative Council of the Governor-General in 1854 he was appointed clerk assistant and later a member of the Legislative Council itself. He bequeathed the half of his immense wealth to his brother Huro Kumar Tagore, the father of Sir Jotindra.

Huro Kumar Tagore, unlike his more famous brother, figured but little in public life. Devoted to music, he was not only its liberal patron but was himself no mean performer. As a Sanskrit scholar he excelled, even in a family noted for its scholarship. He was not only able to write with ease and literary grace, he was able to converse in it fluently. There is a story told of him that when he and his brother wished to raise a tablet to his father's memory they offered a prize among all the most learned Pandits of the day for the best commemorative verses sent in. Huro Kumar anonymously sent in some verses that he had himself composed and these were at once adjudged the best although many of the greatest Sanskrit scholars of the day had competed. He died in 1858 and so well had he managed the family property that he was able to hand on a splendid inheritance to his sons Jotindra Mohan and Sourindra Mohan, who were themselves worthily to uphold the great traditions of their house.

Jotindra Mohan was born in Calcutta in 1831.

He was entered as a student at the Hindu College at the early age of eight and for nine years he continued his studies there, distinguished among his fellow students for his application and ability. Leaving the college when seventeen years old he finished his English education under the tuition of Captain D. L. Richardson, the distinguished scholar and writer. Brought up under strictly orthodox influences, Jotindra Mohan always retained his orthodox beliefs, furnishing by his piety, his charity and the sincerity of his life one of the most striking examples of all that is best in Hinduism, at the same time that his broadmindedness, his wide sympathy and his intense humanity was typical of the awakening that had come to Bengal.

From the first he was keenly interested in all that concerned education. The great cause which so many members of his house had ardently championed found in him a no less keen supporter. Following the family tradition, he had early acquired proficiency in Sanskrit, a language he always venerated as the guardian of the written tenets of his faith. His modern studies, however, kept place with his classical learning and from the first he had a perfect command of English. In his younger days, before the management of a great estate and many public duties occupied all his time, he gave evidence of considerable literary ability, and many contributions to various papers

and journals, not only in prose but in verse, survive to attest his ability and grace of diction. To the *Provakar* and the Literary Gazette he was a frequent contributor on a variety of subjects, social, literary and political. His best-remembered literary productions however, are his dramas and farces in Bengali which attained considerable popularity. The dramatic art like almost every other branch of art in the first half of the 19th century had fallen on evil days, and it was Sir Jotindra's endeavour to raise the stage to a higher level of excellence and to improve the character of the dramas acted. One of his most famous plays was the Bidya Sundara Natak, which did much to set a better standard among Bengali compositions. At his house at Belgachhia the Maharaja organised theatrical entertainments on an elaborate scale, and by providing refined and clever plays and competent actors he succeeded in infusing a healthier moral and artistic tone into modern Bengali dramatic art. At the same time he turned his attention to stage music. Here he had the assistance of his younger brother Raja Sourindra Nath Tagore whose investigation into the theory of Hindu music have won him such a worldwide reputation and such unprecedented honours from well nigh every country in the world. Hindu music, like dramatic art, had suffered eclipse during the troublous years of the eighteenth century and a

wide field was open to enthusiastic musical revivalists. By developing a new system of concerted music, by examining the different theories of music and by comparing English and Indian methods, he set Hindu music on a sounder and higher basis.

Succeeding his father in 1858, he found himself at the age of twenty-seven in possession of one of the most splendid inheritances to which any young man in Bengal has succeeded in modern times. Eight years later the death of his uncle Prasanna Kumar Tagore, who had bequeathed the bulk of his vast property to his brother, who predeceased him, still further added to his great wealth. A splendid career lay before him. Devoted to literature and art, rich beyond the dreams of avarice, the bearer of an honoured name and the head of a distinguished house, immense possibilities opened out before him. From the first he thrust resolutely aside the innumerable temptations that his great possessions inevitably brought with them. Inducements to ease and indolence, to self-indulgence and personal enjoyment, must assuredly have come to the man to whom it might well have seemed that there was nothing else left to strive for. But voluntarily and whole heartedly Jotindra Mohan set himself worthily to carry on the great traditions of his house and to fulfil the great responsibilities that his exceptional position entailed.

The largest land-owner in the province, owning property in no less than eighteen districts and numbering some six hundred thousands souls among his tenants, Jotindra Mohan first came prominently into public notice during the famine of 1866. In Orissa and Midnapore, where be held extensive Zemindaries, the distress proved more severe than any with which the British government had yet had to deal. It was one of the greatest catastrophes of the century in Bengal. With no previous experience of famine on so extensive a scale and unaware that the drought of the previous year would have so disastrous an effect upon the grain supply, Government was utterly unprepared to meet the calamity that faced it during the hot weather months of 1866. With no organised measures of famine relief and hampered by lack of the means of speedy communication and transit, starvation had overtaken thousands of the unfortunate people before relief could come. The area affected was some twelve thousand square miles with a population of four million souls, and it is estimated that something like a quarter of this number perished. How loyally the local officers worked to relieve this terrible distress the reports of the commissioners appointed later to enquire into the cause of the famine prove, while so eager was Government to come to the assistance of the people, once the true facts of the case were known, is shown

by its importation of no less than forty thousand tons of rice, of which even the most generous distribution was unable to dispose of scarcely half. It was the first great natural calamity on such a scale with which the British Government had had to deal and bitter as the experience was it led to the organised measures of famine relief which have coped so effectively with similar calamities in more recent times. Throughout all the anxious days of 1866 Jotindra Mohan loyally supported every scheme of Government relief and himself took energetic personal measures to lessen the distress among his own tenants.

From this time onwards Jotindra Mohan Tagore figured largely in the public eye. In 1870 he was appointed a member of the Bengal Legislative Council by Sir William Grey who in the following year recommended him to the Government of India as deserving some mark of distinction for his valuable services. "Babu Jotindra Mohan is a man of great enlightenment," he wrote in making the recommendation, "and has had a thoroughly good English education. He is one of the leading members of the native community, is of unexceptional private character and is held by his fellow-countrymen in the highest respect. He is a useful member of the Council of the Lieutenant-Governor and takes a deep and thoughtful interest in the progress of the country. He has always been

found ready to contribute liberally to schools, roads and other objects of public interest, both in Calcutta and in the districts in which his estates are situated, and has helped to promote science and literature amongst his countrymen by large contributions to that end. He regularly maintains eighteen poor students in Calcutta, and he fully accepted the obligations of his position in the famine of 1866, remitting the rents of his ryots and feeding 250 paupers daily in Calcutta for a period of three months."

In consequence of this recommendation the title of Raja Bahadur was conferred upon him in March 1871. Sir George Campbell, who had succeeded Sir William Grey as Lieutenant-Governor, in conferring the honour upon him in a Durbar held at Belvedere spoke of him in equally appreciative terms. "I have the honour to convey to you," he said turning to the newly made Raja Bahadur, "the high honour which His Excellency the Viceroy, as the representative of Queen Victoria, has been pleased to confer upon you. I feel a peculiar pleasure in being thus the channel of conveying the honour to you.

"You come from a family great in the annals of Calcutta, I may say great in the annals of the British dominions in India, conspicuous for loyalty to the British Government and for acts of public beneficence.

"But it is not from considerations of your family alone that the Viceroy has been pleased to confer the high honour upon you. You have proved yourself worthy of it by your own merits. Your great intelligence and ability, distinguished public spirit, high character and the services you have rendered to the state deserve a fitting recognition.

"I have had the pleasure of receiving your assistance as a member of the Bengal Council, and can assure you that I highly appreciate the ability and information which you bring to bear upon its deliberations. Indeed nothing can be more acceptable to me than advice from one like yourself. It is true we have had occasion to differ, and honest differences of opinion will always prevail between man and man : but at the same time I can honestly tell you that when we have been on the same side, I have felt your support to be of the utmost value, and when you have chanced to be in opposition, yours has been an intelligent, loyal and courteous opposition."

Later in the same year, Sir George Campbell wrote asking him to allow himself to be nominated for a further term of office as member of the Legislative Council. "Your high character and fair mode of dealing with all questions render your assistance especially valuable," he wrote, "and I have much confidence that you are a man not bound to class interests but prepared to look to the good of

the whole community, high and low alike." About the same time the Raja Bahadur was exempted from appearance in the Civil Courts and in 1877 on the assumption of the Imperial title by Her Majesty Queen Victoria the higher dignity of Maharaja was conferred upon him. In the same year he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council of the Governor General, an office to which he was reappointed again in 1879 and in 1881. In the discussions of many of the most important measures of the day he took a prominent part. The Civil Procedure Code was then under the consideration of the Legislative Council and the criticisms of one who knew Indian conditions and Indian needs so thoroughly as Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore were listened to with consideration and respect. His opinion often decided the fate of a proposed clause in the Bill and Sir A. Hobhouse, the Legal member of Council, generously acknowledged the help he had received from his criticisms and advice. "Whatever can be said on that subject will be said by my friend Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore," he said when speaking in the Council, "for in committee he has supported the views of the objectors with great ability and acuteness, and I must add with equal good feeling and moderation." Later, in speaking of a much discussed clause he added, "If the clause stood as in Bill no. IV, I confess I should not be able to maintain my ground against such an

argument as we have heard from your honourable friend, Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore. I have shown that conviction in the most practical way by succumbing to his arguments in committee and voting with him on his proposal to alter Bill No. IV."

Again as the largest landowner in Bengal, he was especially interested in the long discussions that finally led the passing of the Bengal Tenancy Act in 1885. It had long been obvious that the law regulating the relations between landlord and tenant called for thorough revision and amendment. These relations had been gradually growing more and more strained, both parties complaining of injustice and hardships. The zemindars complained of the failure of the tenants to pay their rents and of the difficulties they experienced in enforcing payment, while the ryots on their part complained of oppression, the exaction of illegal cesses and illegal ejectment from occupancy rights. There can be no doubt that there was a considerable amount of truth on both sides but constant friction had so embittered relations between them that matters were fast coming to a deadlock. This was particularly the case in Behar and in the Indigo districts. In 1893 serious agricultural disturbances occurred at Pabna, while the Behar famine of the following year reduced the ryots to a hopeless condition of poverty. The famine Commission urged the necessity of the immediate introduction of measures to fix definitely

the relations between landlord and tenant. The Agrarian Disputes Act of 1876 was passed as a temporary measure to meet urgent cases, and a Bill to provide at the same time immunity of the ryot from oppression and greater facilities for the speedy realisation of arrears of rent was taken in hand. The Select Committee on the Bill, however, urged that a more comprehensive measure revising the whole rent law of Bengal was urgently needed. Consequently in 1879 the Government of India appointed a special commission to enquire thoroughly into the matter. So great was the subject with which the Bill dealt and so keen the controversy it aroused that it was not until 1885 that the Bill finally emerged as the Bengal Tenancy Act (VIII of 1885). There were at one time during its progress no less than two hundred amendments to the Bill down for discussion and no bill that preceded it had ever come in for so large a share of criticism and discussion. It has been called with much reason the most important measure of the nineteenth century and there can be no doubt that though no measure can be regarded as perfect the Bengal Tenancy Act has been productive of an immense amount of good to both landlords and tenants. The Maharaja in all the discussions in which he took part was fully alive to the necessity of strengthening the position not only of the landlord but also of the ryot. He was anxious above all that the

relations of both should be definitely put on a definite basis. He agreed with Sir Courtney Ilbert, a member of the Select Committee, who during the course of the debate on the Bill aptly summed up the position. 'What the Council have to consider as practical men is, not whether this is an ideally perfect measure, not whether it is a final settlement of questions between landlord and tenant in Bengal, not whether it is likely to usher in a millenium either for the Zemindars or for the ryot, but whether it represents a step in advance, whether it does something substantial towards removing admitted defects in the existing law, whether it does not give some substantial form of security to the tenant, some reasonable facilities to the landlord. It is because I believe that the measure, however it may fall short of ideal perfection, does embody substantial improvements to the existing law that I considered it to be favourable consideration of the Council.'

The main object of the Bill as finally passed was to give the ryot full security in his holding at the same time that it gave the landlord facilities for the collection of rent actually due and a fair share in the increased value of the soil. While it threw on the landlord the onus of disproving the tenant's claim to occupancy, it relieved it, by means of a system of price lists, of the difficulty of proving the increased value of the land. Above all it attempted

to lay down rules which might once and for all put an end to disputes between landlord and tenant, reducing such disputes to single issues and laying down equitable principles for their decision. To maintain the general principles of the act, an application was allowed in any case of dispute between landlord and tenant to determine incidents of a tenancy, while the clauses which relate to records of right and settlements have had wide spread effect in determining the position of both parties.

Honours came fast to Jotindra Mohan during these busy years. In 1879 he was created a Companion of the Order of the Star of India, being raised to the dignity of a Knight Commander of the same Order three years later. In 1890 the title of Maharaja Bahadur was conferred upon him as a personal distinction, and in the following year the title was declared hereditary. Having no son of his own he adopted the son of his brother, Raja Surendra Mohan Tagore, who has now succeeded to his hereditary honours and, known as the Maharaja Sir Prodyot Kumar Tagore Bahadur, is so worthily following in his adopted father's footsteps. In 1890 Sir Jotindra was chosen President of the Reception Committee formed on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales, a grand fete on the maiden and illuminations being arranged in his honour. The Maharaja was also a Fellow of the Calcutta University, one of the governors of the Mayo Hospital,

and a Trustee of the Central Dufferin Fund, a member of the Asiatic Society, a Justice of the Peace and an Honorary Magistrate for the town of Calcutta. These, however, are but a few among his many activities. His charities were unbounded. The possessor of great wealth, he showed himself determined from the first to use it for the public good and there was no charitable scheme in Calcutta for half a century which had not his sympathy and generous support. Though an orthodox Hindu himself, his charities were without distinction of caste or creed. Wherever suffering humanity called for help his response was prompt and unfailing. The relief of physical suffering by organised Hospital work particularly appealed to him. He gave large donations to the District Charitable society and made a free gift to the trustees of the land on which the Mayo Hospital is built. In the Dufferin Fund from its inception he took a keen and personal interest, being a member of the committee and one of the trustees of the Central Fund. A firm believer in the value of open spaces in the great city he gave, with his brother Raja Surendra Mohan, a piece of land in the heart of Calcutta for a public square to be named after his father. In memory of his mother he founded an endowment by a gift of one lac of rupees, for the benefit of Hindu widows, to be known as the 'Maharajmata Sivasundari Devi Hindu Widow Fund.' For the permanent

maintenance of the Moolajori Temple he made a settlement of an estate worth eighty thousand rupees. His subscriptions to local schools all over his vast estates amounted to a large sum. He annually gave a gold medal for proficiency in Sanskrit literature and a gold medal in connection with the Tagore Law Lectures. Another gold medal was for proficiency in physical science, while other scholarships were founded by him for law and Sanskrit. He himself was vice-president of the Faculty of Arts in 1881 and President in the following year. In the same year he was appointed by the Government of India a member of the Education Commission to investigate the working of the system founded in 1854 and to ascertain the actual position of education at the time. Presided over by Sir William Hunter, the Commission went thoroughly into the needs of Indian education and, while finding that in Bengal the system already inaugurated was doing well, made a number of recommendations which have gone far to perfect it still further in recent years.

Sir Jotindra's social entertainments were famous in Calcutta. His hospitability was on a princely scale and there were few European or Indian visitors or residents of distinction in the capital who did not partake of it. At Tagore Castle and at his country seat Emerald Bower outside Calcutta he surrounded himself with a valuable collection of pictures, books and objects of art, his library being one of the most

complete private collections in India. Here, engaged in his favourite literary pursuits and enjoying the music discoursed by his own company of trained musicians, he spent his last years, failing health preventing him from taking his former active part in public affairs yet never ceasing to prevent him until the last from taking a keen interest in all the great public questions of the day. He died on the 10th of January, 1908, and with him passed away one of the few remaining figures of the old school and one of the finest characters in Bengal in the nineteenth century.

Nawab Sir Syed Hassan Ali Mirza Khan Bahadur, Rais-u-dowlah, Amir-ul-omrah, Mahabut Jung

NAWAB SIR SYED HASSAN ALI MIRZA KHAN BAHADUR, RAIS-U-DOWLAH, AMIR-UL-OMRAH, MAHABUT JUNG, G.C.I.E. 1846—1906.

The holder of these proud titles was the direst representative of the old Nawab Nazims of Bengal, round whom for generations the whole history of the Province had centred. From the time when the Musulman Emperors at Delhi first sent a representative to preside over the destinies of the far off eastern Province until the establishment of British supremacy, the Nawab Nazims had been the real rulers of Bengal. With the fall of Suraj-u-Dowlah, however, their long period of absolute power came to an end. Mir Jaffer, placed on the Musnud by Lord Clive after the battle of Plassey, was the first of the new line of Nawabs under British suzerainty. The father of the Nawab Bahadur, the subject of this sketch, was the last to hold the title of Nawab Nazim, a title which he resigned to the British Government on the first of November 1860. His son Sir Syed Hassan Ali was the first of a new line of hereditary Nawab Bahadurs, the acknowledged Premier nobles of Bengal.

Sir Syed Hassan Ali was born on the 25th of August 1846. He was the eldest son of a family consisting of nineteen sons and twenty-one daughters. As the eldest son and heir of the Nawab Nazim his birth was the occasion of great rejoicings, which were made especially memorable by a fire that accidently occurred during a display of fireworks and resulted in the entire destruction of the Imambara. This was the famous Imambara built by Siraj-u-Dowlah at enormous cost in the heyday of his power, and though it had been shorn of much of its glory in the hundred years that had elapsed it was still a magnificent building. The present Imambara which was built to replace it cost sixty lacs and exceeds in size even the splendid Imambara at Hooghly, remaining the last architectural triumph of the Nawab Nazims of Bengal.

The future Nawab Bahadur spent his early days entirely at Murshidabad. From the first, however, his education was entrusted to English tutors and he was carefully trained for the important position in life that he was destined to occupy. He early showed a fondness for sport and all manly games, but these he never allowed to interfere with his studies which he pursued with great zest and application. Conscientious and painstaking he won the approbation of all his instructors. As he grew towards manhood the question of sending him to England to complete his education was long and seriously discussed. The

voyage to Europe was not then the common occurrence among Indian Princes that it has since become, and the Nawab Nazim exhibited a natural reluctance to part for so long a period from his eldest son. Realising, however, what great advantages were likely to accrue to him from a European tour he at length consented. Not only would be he brought into touch with the home Government and the leaders of English life and thought but by visiting the famous centres of industry he would be enabled to realise the great resources of modern times and to gain a wide and comprehensive view of modern conditions. It was in the spring of 1865 that arrangements were finally completed and the Nawabzada at the impressionable age of nineteen, accompanied by two of his younger brothers, set out under the guidance of Colonel Herbert who had been especially selected to escort him. The party left Calcutta by the Peninsular and Oriental Steamer '*Candia*' on the 9th of March, and after visiting Cairo and other parts of Egypt *en route* finally reached Southampton on April the 19th.

On arrival in London the Nawabzada and his brother at once began a round of sight seeing that must have been a continual source of delight to the young men whose previous knowledge of the world had been limited to Murshidabad. Practically everything of interest in London was shown to them. At the British Museum, the Tower and various

other places of interest they spent many fascinating hours. The Crystal Palace was a never failing source of delight, while the opera and the theatres were a revelation to them in their utter dissimilarity from eastern plays and music. Innumerable parties were given in their honour and there were few of the most interesting people of the day whom they did not meet. No efforts were spared to make their stay in London enjoyable and instructive. At the Levée held by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen on May the 20th, they were accorded the special privilege of the private entrée. The Nawabzada had also the honour of being privately presented to Queen Victoria by the Secretary of State for India.

After the conclusion of their visit to London, the princes stayed for a time at Sandgate on the south coast, making many interesting excursions in the neighbourhood including one to Portsmouth where the great naval dockyard was inspected. From Sandgate they went to Birmingham, where the wonders of modern industry were displayed before them in amazing variety. Perhaps no part of their whole tour interested them more than this. Here in the great workshops they saw actually in the making before their eyes those things "Made in Birmingham," with which they had been so long familiar in the finished product. The small arms

factory excited the keenest interest, and they watched for several hours a large order given by the Sultan of Turkey actually in course of execution. At Coventry they had the pleasure of seeing silk stuffs woven from silk which had come from their own estates in Murshidabad; at Kidderminster they saw carpets destined for their own home in course of manufacture; while Worcester furnished them with the sight of its famous glove factories and its still more famous royal porcelain works. At Chester they saw one of the finest English Cathedrals, and at Eaton Hall close by, the residence of the Duke of Westminster, they saw one of the finest country seats in England. At Manchester they were once more in the midst of the noise and stir of modern industry, all that related to the cotton trade being of absorbing interest to them. Returning to London they spent a few more busy days sightseeing and bidding farewell to the many friends they had made during their stay, leaving early in December for a short tour on the Continent preparatory to their return home. They visited among other places Paris, Bologne, Genoa and Florence, embarking at Leghorn for Civita Vecchia in order to see Rome, Pompeii and Naples. They finally bade farewell to Europe on January the 19th 1866, reaching Calcutta on March the 2nd. Though at the outset it had only been contemplated that the tour should last six months, it had extended almost to double that length of time. Colonel

Herbert had remained in charge of the party throughout, and though so much of the young men's time had been taken up with travelling and sight seeing their regular education had not been interrupted, a tutor having been especially appointed while in England to continue their ordinary course of study.

The affairs of his father, the Nawab Nazim, had not meanwhile been proceeding satisfactorily and in 1869 he resolved to go to England to lay his case in person before the Secretary of State. He took with him his eldest son and continued to reside there for twelve years only returning to India in 1881. The young Nawabzada by his two visits to Englnnd thus enjoyed a far more liberal education than that which fell to the lot of most young Indian noblemen of his day. He was reported most favourably upon by Colonel Herbert, who during his long association with him had every opportunity of fully guaging his character. He showed himself to be amiable, steady and extremely anxious to learn. He displayed under unusual circumstances that might have turned the head of any less well balanced youth, much strength of character, a high moral tone and great honesty of purpose.

In the long and unfortunate disputes in which his father was involved he was keenly interested, and it was a great relief to him when they were finally settled. On November the 1st 1880 the Nawab Nazim, by an Indenture signed by himself and the

Secretary of State, voluntarily resigned his styles and titles in favour of the Crown, his eldest son being subsequently granted the hereditary rank of Nawab Bahadur. Four years later the last Nawab Nazim died, and Syed Hassan Ali succeeded as the head of the family.In 1887 the year of the Queen's Jubilee he was created a Knight Commander of the Indian Empire, the assumption of the titles of Intisham-ul-Mulk, Rais-ud-Dowlah, Amir-ul-Omra and Mahabat Jung being at the same time officially recognised. A year later the higher dignity of a Grand Commander of the Indian Empire was conferred upon him. In 1891 a further agreement was entered upon between the Nawab Bahadur and the Secretary of State whereby the former confirmed the agreement entered upon by his father in November 1880, while Government finally settled the Nawab's position, granting him a settled income and landed states in several districts, at the same time recognising him as the premier Noble of Bengal with the hereditary title of Nawab Bahadur and Amir-ul-Omra.

As the head of the Muhammadan community in Bengal the Nawab Bahadur held a position of great respect and his influence was widespread. Apart, however, from his social position he was universally respected for his own personal qualities, for his liberality, his ready sympathy and his unswerving loyalty. In the management of his estates he took

a keen personal interest and in times of suffering and distress he was always anxious to go personally to enquire and to render help. When heavy floods ruined the crops and swept away the unfortunate cultivator's cattle and homesteads, it was to the Nawab Bahadur that they looked for loans and gifts to help them to tide over the evil times. During the severe earthquake of June the 12th 1897 he himself only barely escaped with his life. He was sitting at the time in one of the ground floor rooms of the palace facing the river, and being in feeble health he had to be carried outside by his attendants. They were only just in time for as they reached the open space on the river bank the whole of the second floor of the palace fell in, compeltely burying beneath the debris the room in which the Nawab Bahadur had been sitting. The damage done to the palace and other buildings amounted to three lacs of rupees. The havoc wrought by the earthquake in the district was very great, but the Nawab, although heavily handicapped by the expenditure entailed in restoring his own home. came forward generously to relieve the distress.

Thus, busy with the management of his estate and the control of his family affairs, the Nawab Bahadur lived his quiet uneventful life at Murshidabad until his death in 1906. The relatives of the Nawab were numerous and it required much tact to decide petty disputes and generally prevent friction

among them. So numerous were they that the Nizamat College was built exclusively for their education at a cost of Rs. 1,20,000. The Palace in which the Nawab Bahadur resided is a splendid building, and one of the largest in Bengal being 425 ft. long 200 ft. wide and 804 ft. high. It contains a fine Banquetting Hall 290 ft. long with sliding doors encased in mirrors, and a magnificent chandelier with one hundred and fifty branches presented to the Nawab by Queen Victoria. The Palace contains some fine pictures, notably one of King William the Fourth presented to the grandfather of the Nawab by the King himself. The hospitability of the Nawab Bahadur was proverbial, and every visitor of whatever rank or class was always sure of a welcome at the Palace. Thus worthily maintaining the best traditions of his house, the Premier noble of Bengal and a loyal subject of the Empire, he passed his closing days amid universal respect and esteem.

THE END

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

DS
485
B49B7
1923

Bradley-Birt, Francis Bradley
Twelve men of Bengal in the
nineteenth century

UTL AT DOWNSVIEW
D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C
39 08 18 05 14 005 5